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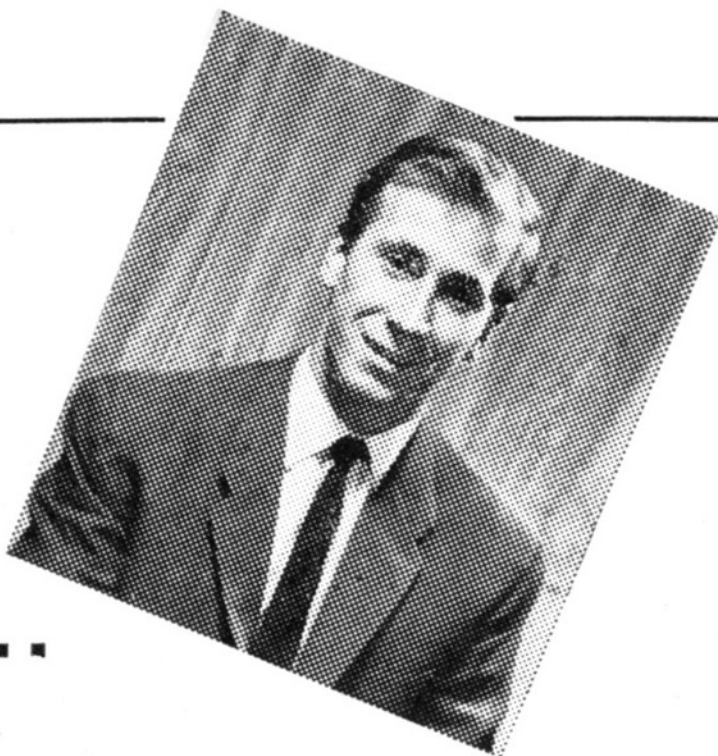
1/-

UMBRELLA IN THE SKY



TOP

**SOCCER STAR
BOBBY
CHARLTON..**



writes a "top" football story about



**...that top
football
character—
"ROY of the
ROVERS"...**

every week in

TIGER

Tuesdays—4½d.

★ *All boys vote—"ITS TOPS!"*

Umbrella in the Sky

TWO THOUSAND LONELY MILES FROM HOME, THE ROYAL AIR FORCE HURRICANE WING FOUGHT GALLANTLY IN THE SKIES OVER LENINGRAD IN DEFENCE OF A FOREIGN SOIL... OF A STRANGE ALLY... BUT MOST OF ALL, OF FREEDOM.





"I consider it to be in the interests of the Reich no longer to permit our eastern provinces to remain unprotected in the face of the tremendous concentration of Bolshevist divisions. Thus came about the result intended by the British and Russian co-operation -- namely, the tying up of such powerful German forces in the east that the radical conclusion of the war in the west could no longer be vouched for by German High Command."

..... Adolf Hitler. June, 1941.

WITH THE ABOVE WORDS, HITLER ANNOUNCED THE OPENING OF WAR ON THE SOVIET UNION, THUS BEGINNING ONE OF THE MOST SAVAGE STRUGGLES IN HISTORY.



Chapter 1. STRUGGLE TO THE DEATH

ON JUNE 22ND., 1941, ADOLF HITLER UNFOLDED THE FINAL PHASE OF HIS PLAN FOR THE DOMINATION OF EUROPE. THE GERMAN ARMY PLUNGED INTO RUSSIA ON AN 1,800 MILE FRONT FROM THE BALTIC TO THE BLACK SEA, AND RUSSIAN FORCES FOUGHT VAINLY AGAINST THE SMASHING ADVANCE OF HITLER'S LEGIONS...

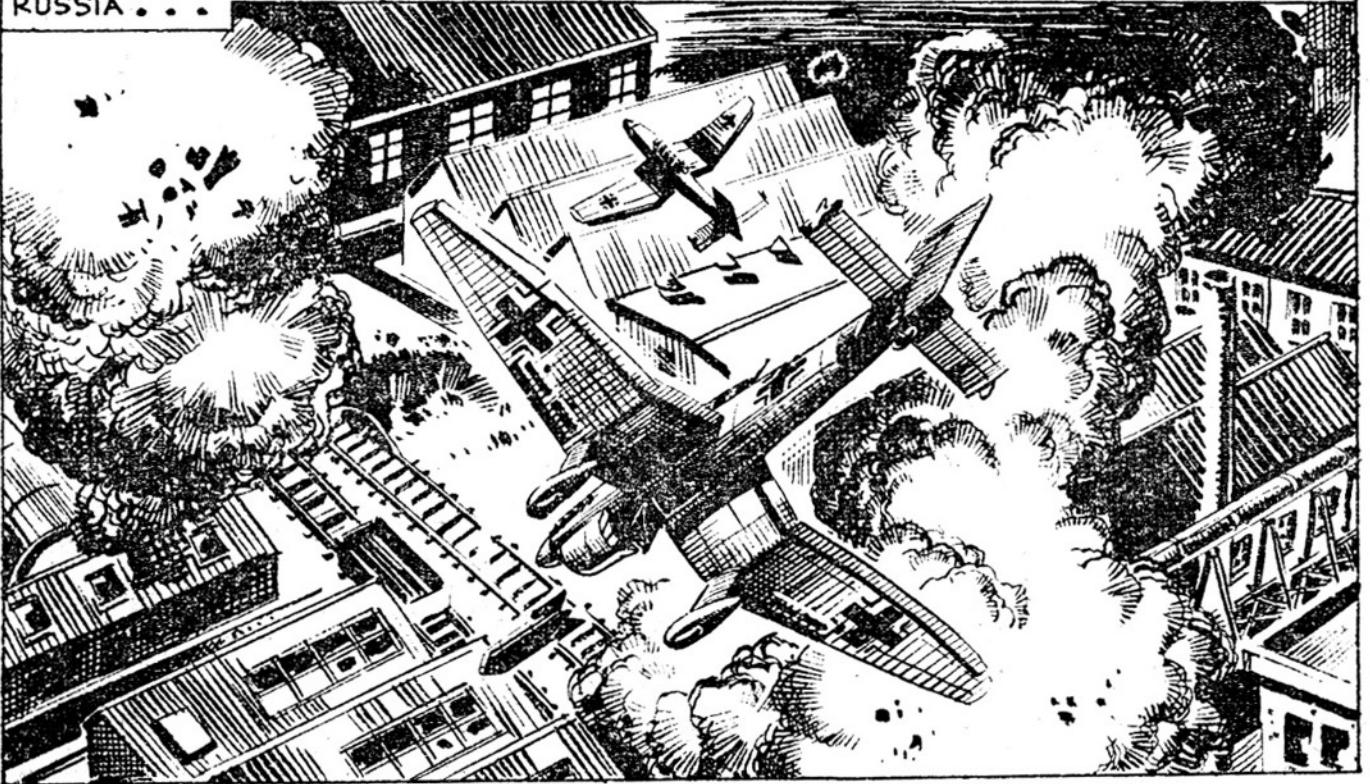


THE MASTER PLAN FOR VICTORY ORDAINED THAT MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD WERE TO BE CAPTURED ALMOST AT ONCE, THUS TAKING THE NERVE CENTRE OF THE RUSSIAN WAR MACHINE, AND CLOSING THE BALTIC PORTS TO ALLIED SUPPLY SHIPS. THE RAPID BREAK-UP OF RUSSIA WOULD FOLLOW!



Umbrella in the Sky

SPEED WAS THE ESSENCE OF THE ATTACK! A LINE FROM ARCHANGEL TO ASTRAKHAN WAS TO BE REACHED WITHIN TWELVE WEEKS, BEFORE THE TERRIBLE RUSSIAN WINTER SET IN. SUCH WAS THE CONFIDENCE OF THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND, THAT EIGHTY FOUR DAYS WAS CONSIDERED SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE VICTORY IN RUSSIA . . .



BUT IN ALL SECTORS, THE RED ARMY AND AIR FORCE FOUGHT WITH UNPRECEDENTED FEROCITY AND DETERMINATION, SLOWING THE MASSIVE ADVANCE OF THE ENEMY, AND ON JULY 19TH, BRINGING THE FRONT TO A STANDSTILL . . .



GERMAN FORWARD ASSAULT TROOPS HAD ADVANCED TOO FAR AHEAD OF SUPPORTING UNITS, AND THE RUSSIANS SAW IN THIS A GREAT CHANCE TO THREATEN THEIR LINES OF COMMUNICATION. . .

WE ARE GOING IN BEHIND ENEMY POSITIONS TO OPERATE IN SMALL BANDS OF GUERRILLAS, THE FIRST OF WHOM WILL BE FROM THIS UNIT, LED BY MAJOR SAROV HERE. FIGHT WELL, AND GOOD LUCK!



WITHIN TWELVE HOURS, THE SOVIET GUERRILLAS HAD MOVED THROUGH GAPS IN THE GERMAN LINE ON THE LENINGRAD FRONT AND MAJOR SAROV'S TROOPS FANNED OUT RIGHT AND LEFT. . .

INTELLIGENCE REPORTS COLUMNS OF VEHICLES AND SUPPORT TROOPS MOVING EAST TO REINFORCE

MOTORISED UNITS ON THE LENINGRAD FRONT. THEY WILL BE USING THIS ROAD SOUTH OF HERE. SECTIONS A, B AND C, HERE ARE YOUR ORDERS—



Umbrella In the Sky

TWO SECTIONS WOULD HOLD POSITIONS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ROAD AHEAD OF ENEMY COLUMNS, WHILE THE THIRD WOULD FIND AND ENGAGE THE ENEMY FORCE, SO THAT IT WOULD COME UNDER FIRE FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE RUSSIAN TRIANGLE . . .



IN THE COLD SILENCE OF THE RUSSIAN COUNTRYSIDE, THE DISTANT WHINING OF HEAVY LORRIES CARRIED FAR AND EVENTUALLY THE FEEBLE RAYS OF DIMMED HEADLAMPS APPEARED HALF A MILE AWAY . . .



UNAWARE OF THE CHAOS THAT WAS ABOUT TO ENGULF THEM, THE GERMAN TROOPS DOZED IN THE LURCHING TRUCKS. THE ROADS HAD BEEN CHURNED INTO LITTLE BETTER THAN MUD TRACKS BY THE ADVANCING TANKS, BUT DESPITE THE HARDSHIPS OF TRAVEL, GERMAN MORALE WAS HIGH.

WHAT A COUNTRY!
NOTHING BUT MUD AND SLUSH!
I DON'T BLAME THE IVANS FOR
PULLING OUT OF THIS MESS,
WHO WANTS TO FIGHT
FOR A PIG STY LIKE
THIS?

BE
CONSOLED, MY FRIEND, IN
THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WE
WON'T BE HERE MUCH LONGER!
A FEW MORE WEEKS AND
WE WILL STAND AMONG THE
RUINS OF MOSCOW ITSELF.



TEN MINUTES LATER, THE HUGE TYRES OF THE GERMAN VEHICLES WERE GRINDING PONDEROUSLY TOWARD THE LAND MINES IN THE MUD. **THEN...**

HOLD
IT, MEN, HOLD
IT!



EXPLOSION AFTER EXPLOSION ROCKED THE ENEMY COLUMN AND THE GERMANS TUMBLED IN CONFUSION OUT OF THEIR TRUCKS. A SHRILL CRY WENT UP FROM THE DARK FIELDS AROUND . . .

**FIRE, FIRE,
FIRE!**



WITH MORTARS, GRENADES AND SMALL ARMS, THE SOVIET TROOPS BLASTED THE ENEMY. A LURID GLOW ILLUMINATED THE TARGET, SHOWING GERMAN TROOPS STRUGGLING TO GET UNDAMAGED TRUCKS PAST THE WRECKAGE, AND ALONG THE ROAD TO SAFETY . . .

CONCENTRATE
ON THE TRUCKS IN THE
REAR! THE OTHERS
WON'T GET
FAR!



FOR FOUR MINUTES THE FEROCIOUS ASSAULT CONTINUED AND ONLY A HANDFUL OF GERMAN TRUCKS BLUNDERED PAST THE PILE OF MINE DEBRIS, AND SPED OFF INTO THE DARKNESS.



AS THE SMALL RUSSIAN FORCE WITHDREW FROM THE SCENE OF DESTRUCTION, A BRILLIANT YELLOW GLOW APPEARED IN THE SKY ABOUT A MILE TO THE EAST. IT TOLD THEM THAT A AND B SECTIONS HAD STRUCK AT THE ENEMY TRUCKS THAT HAD ESCAPED. SERGEANT ROSLOV SMILED GRIMLY AS HE PAUSED TO LOOK BACK.



Umbrella in the Sky

LATER THAT EVENING, SERGEANT ROSLOV REPORTED TO THE FARMHOUSE HEADQUARTERS BEHIND THE GERMAN LINES. MAJOR SAROV LISTENED INTENTLY TO THE REPORT...

WE ENGAGED A COLUMN OF FOURTEEN HEAVY TRANSPORT VEHICLES PROCEEDING TO TANK UNITS ON THE LENINGRAD FRONT. THE ENEMY FORCE WAS DESTROYED, SIR!

WE HAVE HAD FAVOURABLE REPORTS FROM OTHER AREAS, SERGEANT. AND THIS RAID POLICY WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE ENEMY OFFENSIVE RE-OPENS ON THE FRONT!



BUT THE BREATHING SPACE ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT ONLY LASTED FOR TWO WEEKS. IN EARLY AUGUST, THE GERMAN ADVANCE WAS RESUMED, AND IN THREE MONTHS THE LEGIONS OF THE REICH HAD STORMED FORWARD UNTIL THE GREAT CITY OF KIEV WAS WITHIN THEIR SIGHTS. IN THE NORTH, THE WAY TO LENINGRAD LAY OPEN. AND MAJOR SAROV'S TROOPS HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN TO NEW DEFENCES.



A MOST TERRIBLE AND SAVAGE BATTLE FOR THE CONTROL OF LENINGRAD HAD BEGUN.

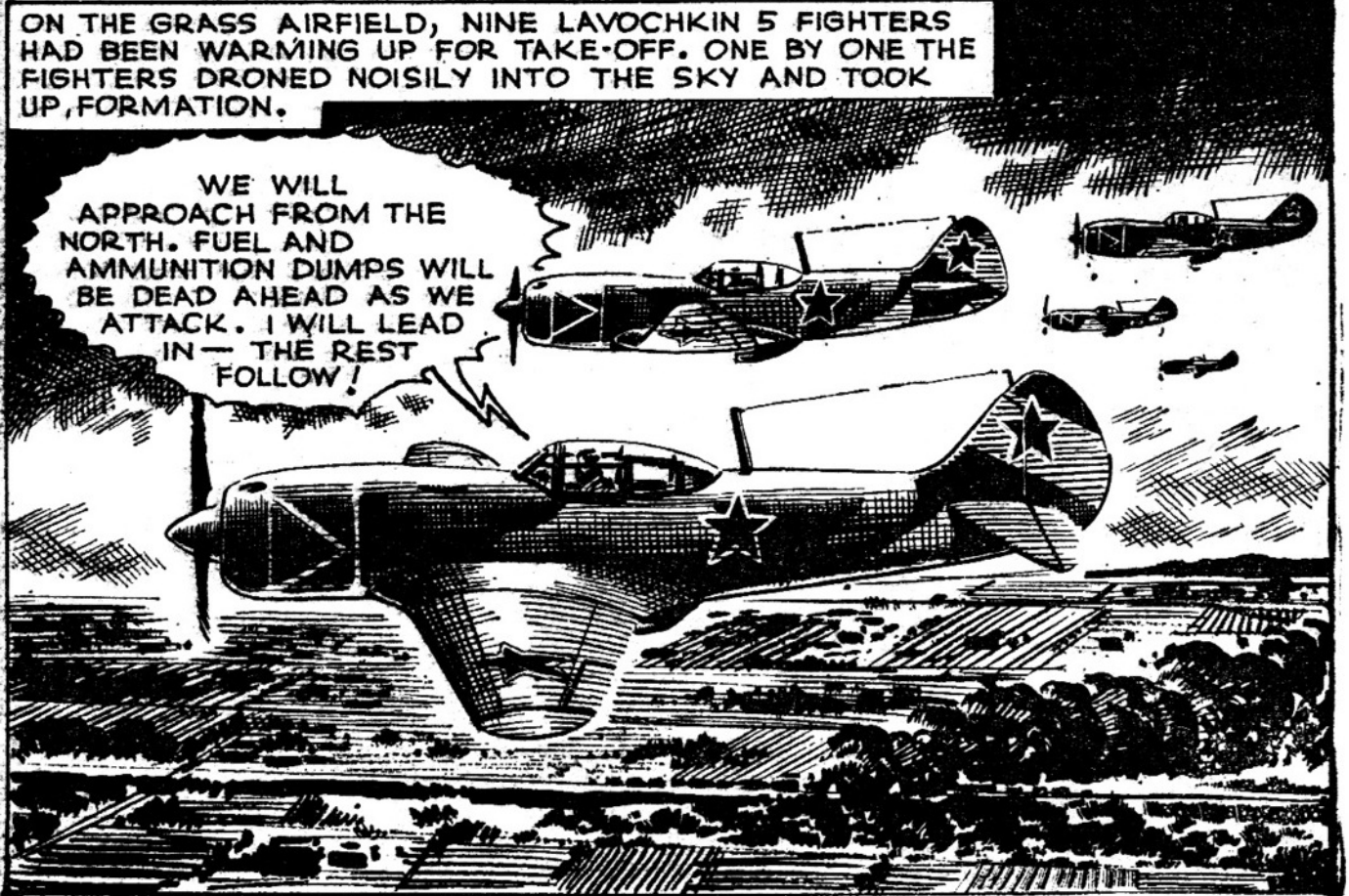
THE RUSSIAN FORCES COUNTER-ATTACKED AGAIN AND AGAIN FOR IF LENINGRAD FELL, THEY WOULD LOSE CONTROL OF THE RAILROAD TO MURMANSK, AND DESPERATELY NEEDED SUPPLIES FROM BRITAIN AND AMERICA WOULD BE CUT OFF. THE RED AIR FORCE FACED A HUGE TASK IN SUPPORT OF THEIR GROUND FORCES.

HEAVY FIGHTING IS RAGING ON ALL SIDES OF THIS CITY. WE ARE TO BEAT UP THE FIGHTER AIRFIELD WHICH IS PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR THE ENEMY FORCES IN OUR OWN AREA.



ON THE GRASS AIRFIELD, NINE LAVOCHKIN 5 FIGHTERS HAD BEEN WARMING UP FOR TAKE-OFF. ONE BY ONE THE FIGHTERS DRONED NOISILY INTO THE SKY AND TOOK UP FORMATION.

WE WILL APPROACH FROM THE NORTH. FUEL AND AMMUNITION DUMPS WILL BE DEAD AHEAD AS WE ATTACK. I WILL LEAD IN — THE REST FOLLOW!



AFTER ONLY TWENTY MINUTES OF FLYING, THE ADVANCE GERMAN AIRFIELD WAS IN SIGHT. BELOW, SEVERAL ME.109'S WERE BEING ARMED UP, AND IT BECAME OBVIOUS TO YEGOROV, THE FLIGHT LEADER, THAT THE ATTACK SHOULD BE A REWARDING ONE.

A FIELD DAY,
BOYS, THEY'RE ALL AT
HOME. LET THEM HAVE IT
HARD, AND GET OUT AS
SOON AS YOU CAN.
HERE WE
GO!



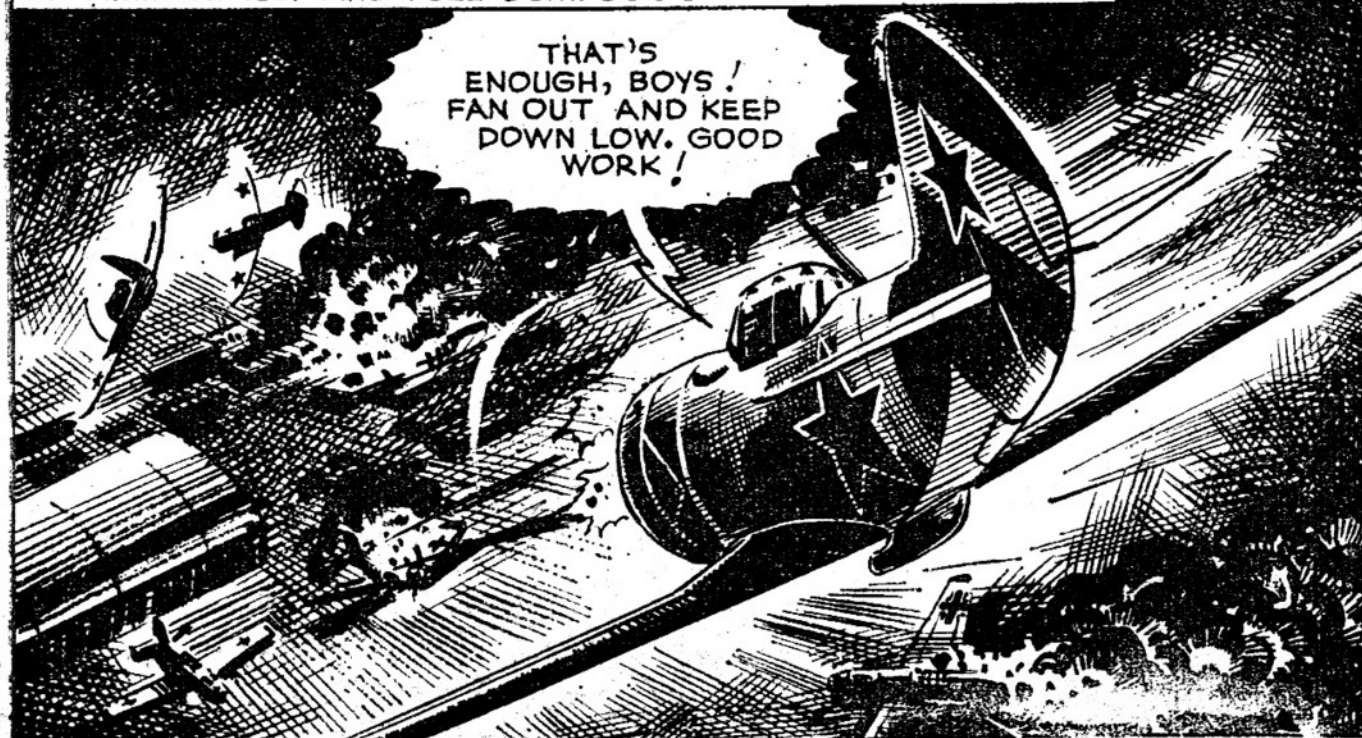
FOLLOWING THE FLIGHT LEADER IN, THE RUSSIAN PILOTS ATTACKED THE ENEMY AIRFIELD WITH ZEAL AND DETERMINATION. BUT THE GERMAN ANTI-AIRCRAFT CREWS ON THE GROUND WERE READY AND WAITING FOR THEM...



IN SPITE OF THE CONCENTRATED AND ACCURATE ACK-ACK FIRE OF THE ENEMY, THE RUSSIAN FIGHTERS MADE PASS AFTER PASS AT THE ENEMY INSTALLATIONS BELOW.



AFTER FIFTEEN MINUTES OF DETERMINED STRAFING, ONLY FIVE OF THE NINE SOVIET FIGHTERS REMAINED, AND WITH AMMUNITION NOW VERY LOW, THE FLIGHT LEADER, MAJOR YEGOROV, CALLED OFF THE ATTACK. BELOW, SEVERAL ENEMY AIRCRAFT LAY BURNING, AND CLOUDS OF SMOKE TOLD OF HITS ON AMMUNITION AND FUEL DUMPS...



Umbrella in the Sky

AS THE RUSSIAN FIGHTERS, MANY OF THEM BADLY HOLED, RETURNED TO BASE, THE PILOTS LOOKED SADLY DOWN AT THE MAMMOTH STRUGGLE OF THE RED ARMY WITH THE MIGHT OF THE INVADERS. TO THEM IT SEEMED THAT THERE WERE TOO MANY JOBS TO BE DONE, AND TOO FEW HOURS TO FIGHT IN. SOVIET SOLDIERS LOOKED UP, BUT WITH DIFFERENT THOUGHTS....

WHAT THE DEVIL ARE OUR FLYERS DOING? WHY DON'T THEY HELP US? CAN'T THEY SEE THE SITUATION DOWN HERE?

THOSE FIGHTERS ARE PROBABLY RETURNING FROM A RAID. EVERY DIVISION NEEDS AIR SUPPORT, BUT WE ALL CAN'T HAVE IT AT ONCE. IT'S THE SAME ALL OVER RUSSIA, IF WE HAVE COVER, OTHER TROOPS WILL GO WITHOUT!



AS SOON AS THE PLANES HAD LANDED, GROUND CREWS WENT TO WORK WHILE THE PILOTS MADE REPORTS, AND WERE GIVEN THEIR NEXT MISSION. THIS WAS THE CEASELESS WAR AGAINST TIME, A STRUGGLE TO THE DEATH...

HAVE YOU GOT THREE SERVICEABLE AIRCRAFT, YEGOROV, FOR A SUPPORT OPERATION ON THE NORTHERN FLANK? I'M SORRY TO CHASE YOU AS SOON AS YOU GET IN, BUT IT'S A HIGH COMMAND ORDER.

YES, MYSELF, ALOV AND BUNEYEV HERE. WHAT'S THE OP?

COME OVER TO THE MAP. BY THE WAY, SOME GOOD NEWS! WE'RE TO BE JOINED BY A WING OF HURRICANES FROM BRITAIN. DUE TO ARRIVE ANY TIME NOW. GOOD PILOTS, ALL OF THEM!



SEEING HER ALLY IN DIRE DISTRESS, BRITAIN HAD SENT A TOKEN FORCE OF HER MUCH NEEDED HURRICANES TO THE AID OF THE RED AIR FORCE. AS THE THREE SOVIET PILOTS RUSHED TO THEIR AIRCRAFT, GLADDENED BY THE GOOD NEWS, RE-FUELLING WAS STILL IN PROGRESS.

SHE'S ALL ARMED UP, SIR, WE'LL ONLY BE A MINUTE!

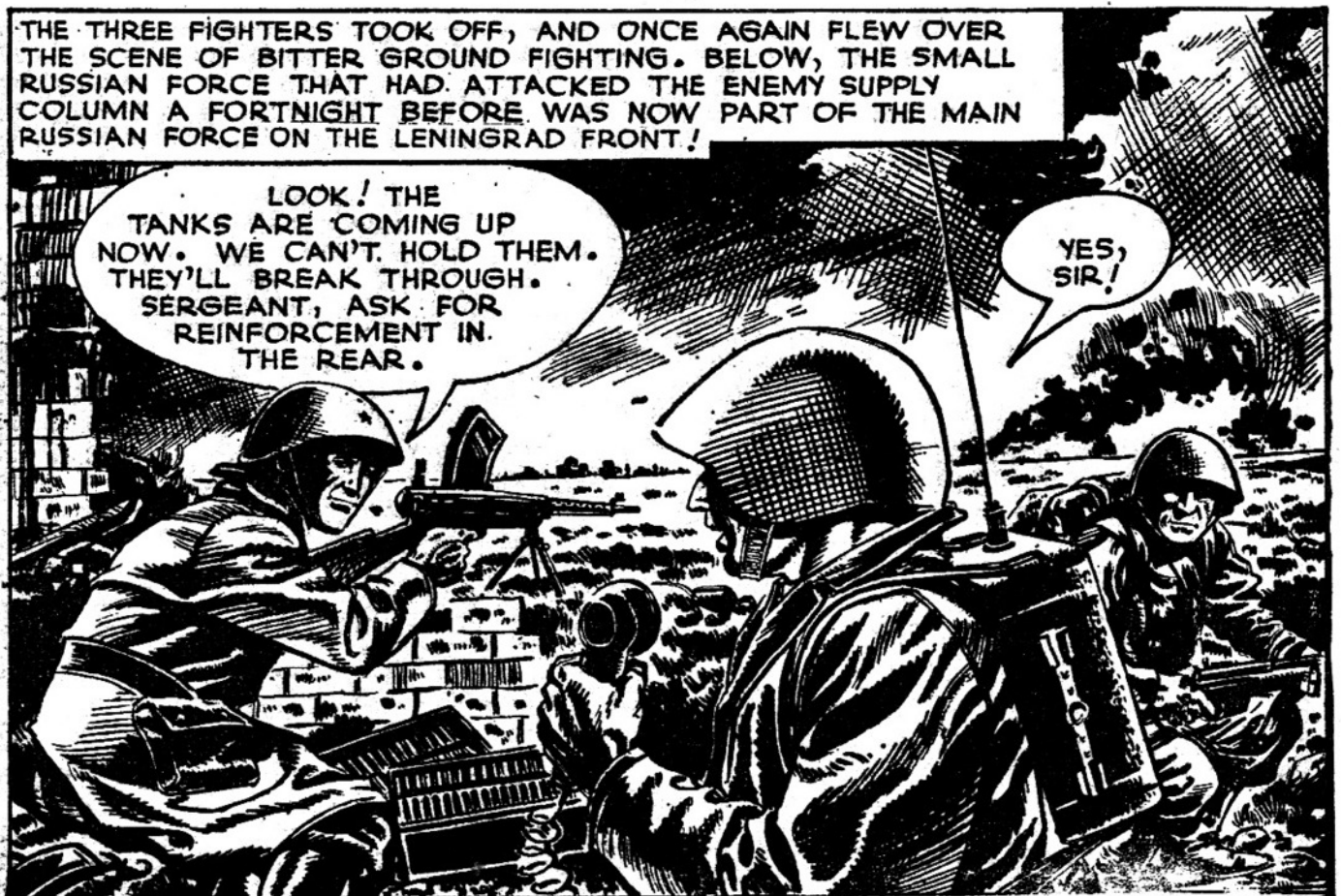
COME ON! SPEED IT UP. STARTER WAGONS AND FIRE CREWS, OVER HERE! MOVE, MOVE.



THE THREE FIGHTERS TOOK OFF, AND ONCE AGAIN FLEW OVER THE SCENE OF BITTER GROUND FIGHTING. BELOW, THE SMALL RUSSIAN FORCE THAT HAD ATTACKED THE ENEMY SUPPLY COLUMN A FORTNIGHT BEFORE WAS NOW PART OF THE MAIN RUSSIAN FORCE ON THE LENINGRAD FRONT!

LOOK! THE TANKS ARE COMING UP NOW. WE CAN'T HOLD THEM. THEY'LL BREAK THROUGH. SERGEANT, ASK FOR REINFORCEMENT IN THE REAR.

YES, SIR!



IN A FEW MINUTES, THE REPLY CAME THROUGH...

TANK REINFORCEMENTS
WILL BE MOVED UP IMMEDIATELY,
SIR. FORWARD INFANTRY UNITS ARE TO
WITHDRAW AT ONCE TO A MINEFIELD.
ONE MILE IN OUR REAR. WE MUST
DIG IN THERE.

RIGHT,
ROSLOV, TELL THE
MEN TO MOVE
BACK.

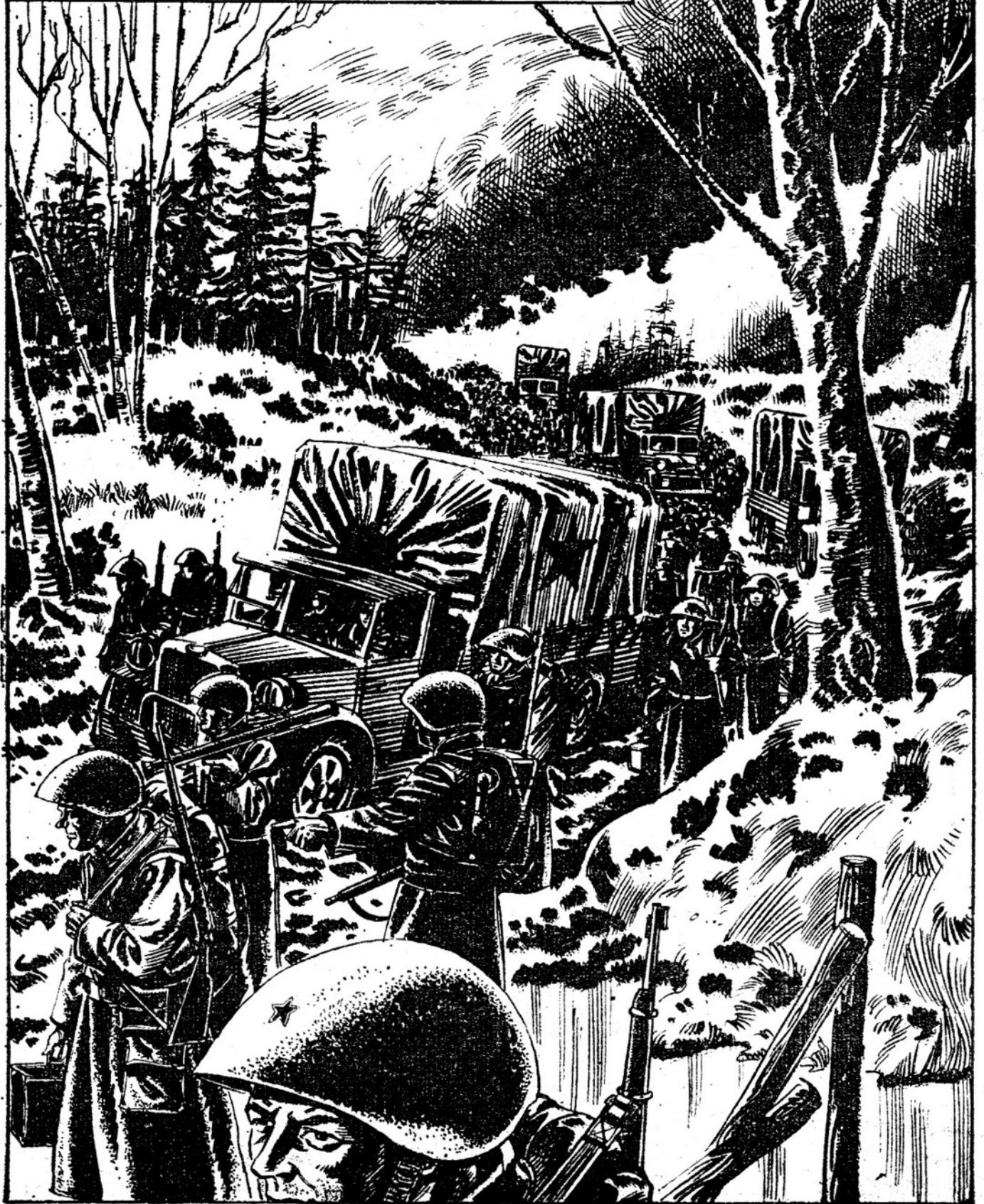


AS HIS TROOPS WITHDREW, MAJOR SAROV RADIOED H. Q. AGAIN.

HEADQUARTERS, THIS IS SAROV,
'E' BATTALION. I REPEAT, STRONG FORCE
OF ENEMY TANKS MOVING UP, POSITION
B- SEVEN, F- THREE. THIS IS A MAJOR
ENEMY THRUST AND I STRONGLY REQUEST
AIR SUPPORT WITHIN THE NEXT FORTY
EIGHT HOURS ! WITHDRAWING
AS ORDERED... OUT !




AS THE INFANTRY WITHDREW, MAJOR SAROV FEARED THAT THE ENEMY WERE ABOUT TO BREACH THE RUSSIAN DEFENCE LINE ON HIS SECTOR. A COUNTER-ATTACK COULD ONLY BE MADE WITH AIR SUPPORT. BUT WERE THE AIRCRAFT AVAILABLE, WOULD THEY COME IN TIME?



Chapter 2. ANOTHER COUNTRY'S WAR

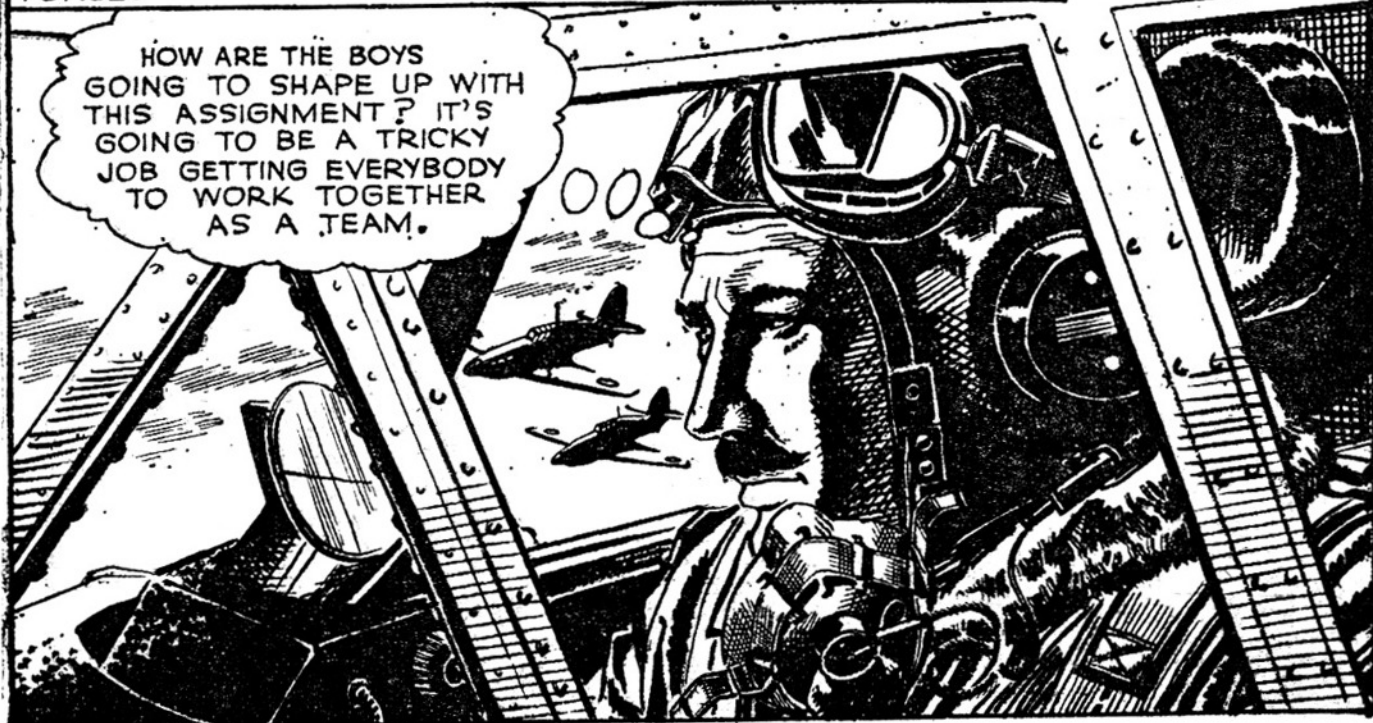
A FORCE THAT COULD SUPPLY THE ANSWER TO EVERY RUSSIAN INFANTRYMAN'S DREAM WAS EVEN AT THAT MOMENT, FLYING OVER THE ENDLESS WASTE OF THE TUNDRA. A WING OF ROYAL AIR FORCE HURRICANES WERE ON THE LAST LAP OF A LONG JOURNEY. THE AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN SHIPPED TO MURMANSK, AND THERE ASSEMBLED FOR ACTION IN THE LENINGRAD AREA. . .



LET
DOWN TO TEN THOUSAND
AT FIVE HUNDRED FEET
PER MINUTE. ETA AT BALKOV
BASE, ANOTHER TWELVE
MINUTES' FLYING TIME.
KEEP A CLOSE EYE
ON YOUR
FUEL!

COMMANDING THE WING OF HURRICANES WAS SQUADRON LEADER RAYMOND MILLS, A TOUGH VETERAN OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN, AND WITH HIM WERE SEVERAL DISTINGUISHED FIGHTER PILOTS OF THE RAF. AS THE AIRCRAFT NEARED THE END OF THEIR FLIGHT, MANY A PILOT WAS WONDERING WHAT LIFE WOULD BE LIKE WITH THE RED AIR FORCE.

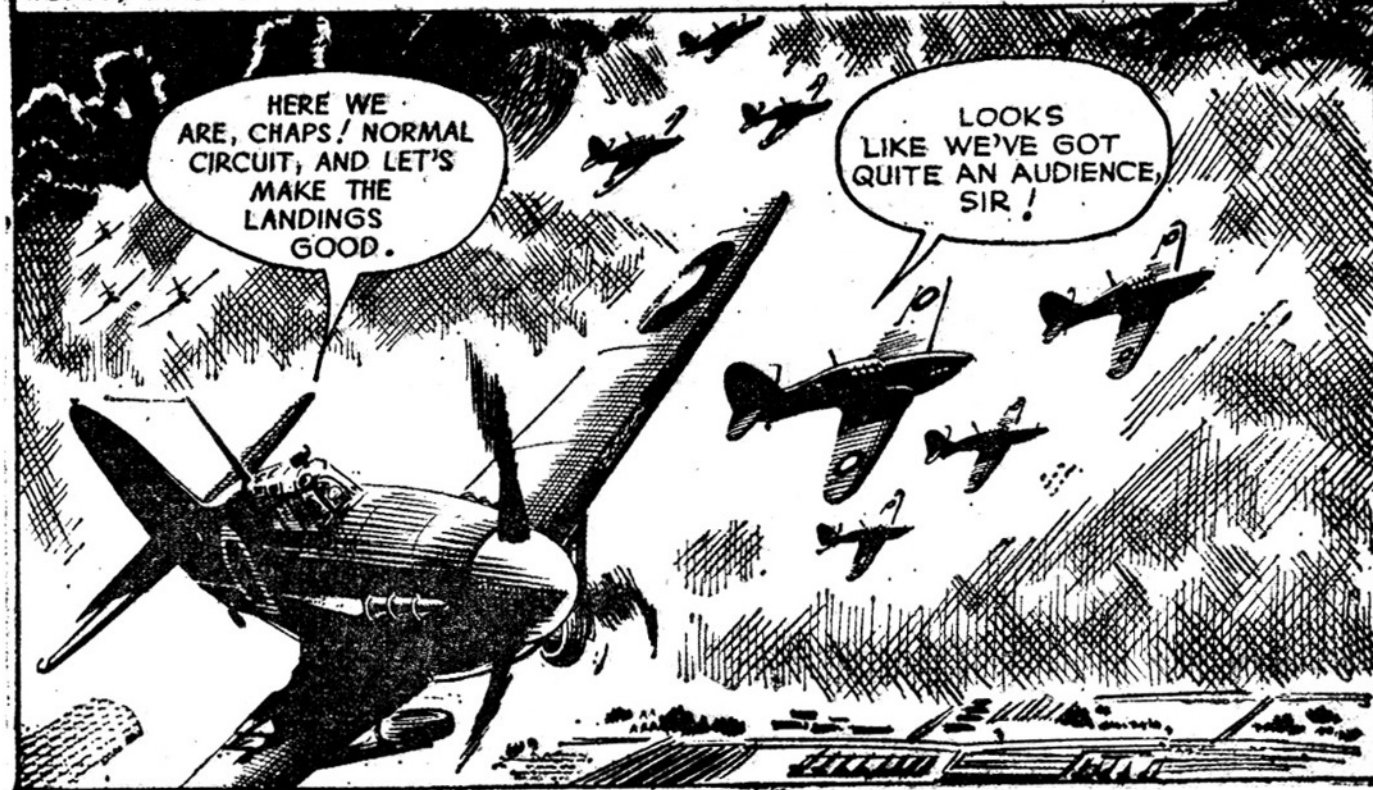
HOW ARE THE BOYS GOING TO SHAPE UP WITH THIS ASSIGNMENT? IT'S GOING TO BE A TRICKY JOB GETTING EVERYBODY TO WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM.



THE SQUADRON LEADER'S THOUGHTS WERE INTERRUPTED WHEN, IN THE DISTANCE, THE FAMILIAR SIGHT OF A FIGHTER AIRFIELD APPEARED THROUGH THE BROKEN CLOUD. HE SWUNG HIS FIGHTER INTO A GENTLE TURN, AND GAVE ORDERS FOR LANDING....

HERE WE ARE, CHAPS! NORMAL CIRCUIT, AND LET'S MAKE THE LANDINGS GOOD.

LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT QUITE AN AUDIENCE, SIR!



Umbrella in the Sky

AS WORD GOT ROUND THAT THE HURRICANES WERE ARRIVING, ALL THE PILOTS AND CREWS OF BALKOV AIRFIELD GATHERED TO WATCH THE R.A.F. PLANES LAND. THE FIRST AIRCRAFT TOUCHED DOWN AND A LOUD CHEER WENT UP FROM THE RUSSIANS...



WHEN ALL THE AIRCRAFT HAD LANDED SAFELY, THE PILOTS QUICKLY CHANGED IN THEIR NEW QUARTERS, AND HAD A MUCH NEEDED MEAL. AFTER THAT, THE WING WAS ASKED TO ASSEMBLE IN THE MESS.



THE CYNICAL COMMENT CAME FROM FLYING OFFICER BOB HUNTER, AN UNPOPULAR, BUT VERY CAPABLE MEMBER OF THE WING.

HUNTER, I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHY YOU JOINED THE R.A.F. IN THE FIRST PLACE!

I WAS CALLED UP, AND I LIKED FLYING. IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT! BUT I DIDN'T JOIN UP TO FIGHT ANOTHER COUNTRY'S WAR! THERE'S QUITE ENOUGH TO DO BACK HOME.

IT'S THE SAME WAR, HUNTER, FOR THE SAME REASONS. WHAT HAPPENS OVER HERE WILL EFFECT THE WHOLE ALLIED WAR EFFORT.

TO HIS FELLOW PILOTS, HUNTER'S ATTITUDE WAS STRANGE AND HOSTILE, BUT ONE MAN IN THE SQUADRON HAD AN INKLING OF WHAT LAY BEHIND IT. THAT WAS THE FLIGHT COMMANDER, BRUCE NELSON...

POOR OLD HUNTER ISN'T GOING TO BE POPULAR AT THIS RATE. PITY, BECAUSE HE'S A GOOD PILOT, AND A GOOD SCRAPPER...



Umbrella in the Sky

NELSON KNEW THAT HUNTER HAD VOLUNTEERED FOR FLYING TO PROVE TO HIMSELF THAT HE WAS AS COURAGEOUS AS THE NEXT MAN. BUT OPERATIONAL FLYING HAD ONLY INCREASED HIS DOUBTS ABOUT HIMSELF, AND HE FOUGHT WITH RECKLESS FURY IN THE AIR, DRIVING HIMSELF TO PERILOUS ACTS OF DARING.



NELSON'S THOUGHTS WERE INTERRUPTED WHEN THE RUSSIAN STATION COMMANDER, COLONEL SERGEI LUDERKIN, ENTERED TO WELCOME THE NEW ARRIVALS...

WELCOME, BRITISH FRIENDS!
YOU COME TO US WHEN THE RED AIR FORCE IS FACED WITH A POWERFUL ENEMY OPERATING FROM WELL WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF OUR COUNTRY. OUR LOSSES HAVE BEEN HEAVY, BUT WE ARE DETERMINED TO STEM THE GERMAN ADVANCE! THE SOVIET AIR FORCE WELCOMES YOU MOST WARMLY TO ASSIST US IN THIS EFFORT.





BOB HUNTER HAD MADE HIS FIRST ENEMY IN RUSSIA: HE COULD SEE THE ANGER IN THE YOUNG RUSSIAN'S EYES, AND HE SENSED THE HOSTILITY OF THE OTHER RED AIR FORCE PILOTS. THE FOLLOWING DAY, BATTLE ORDERS ARRIVED FOR THE R.A.F. . .

WE WILL USE FOUR HURRICANES AND FOUR LAVOCHKINS. WE ARE TO GIVE CLOSE SUPPORT TO 'E' RATTALION, ON THE LENINGRAD FRONT. THE ENEMY HAS BROKEN THROUGH, AND THE SITUATION IS GRAVE. WE WILL BE MET BY OUR DIVE BOMBERS OVER THE TARGET.

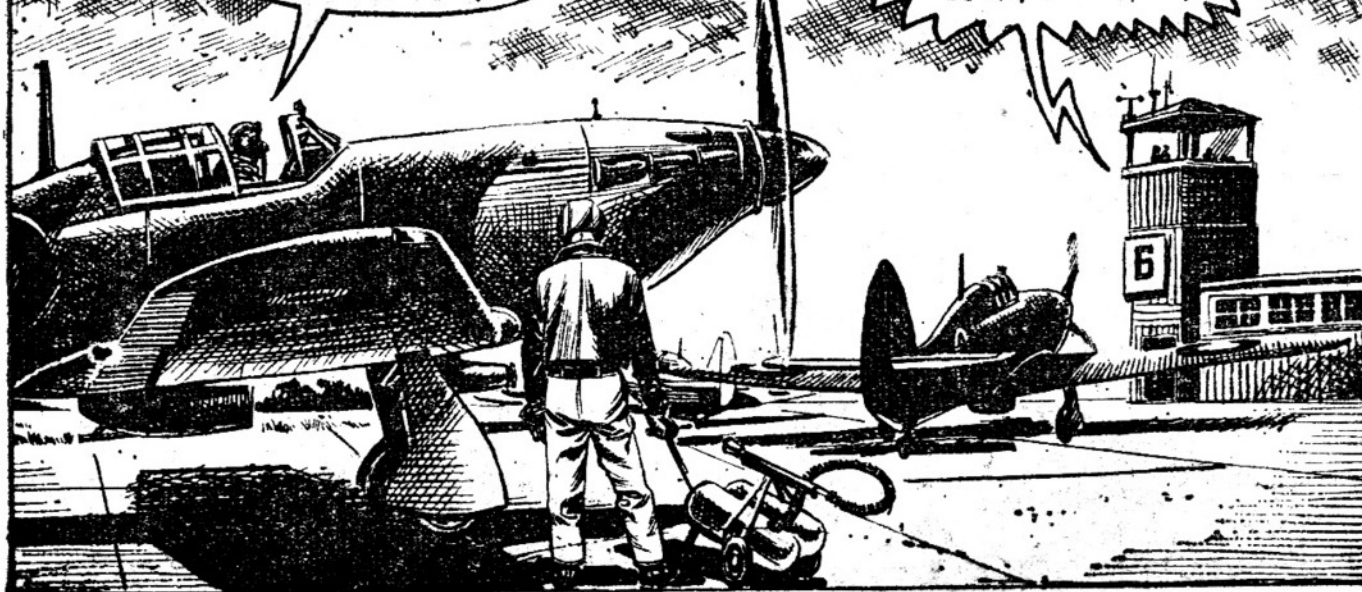
THAT'S QUITE CLEAR, MAJOR. OUR BOYS WILL BE KEEN TO GET IN SOME FIGHTING. I'LL PASS ON THE DETAILS!



WITHIN AN HOUR, THE EIGHT ALLIED AIRCRAFT WERE WARMING UP. IN THE COCKPIT OF ONE OF THE HURRICANES, BOB HUNTER STROVE TO STIFLE THE ATTACK OF NERVES THAT OVERTOOK HIM BEFORE EACH MISSION . . .

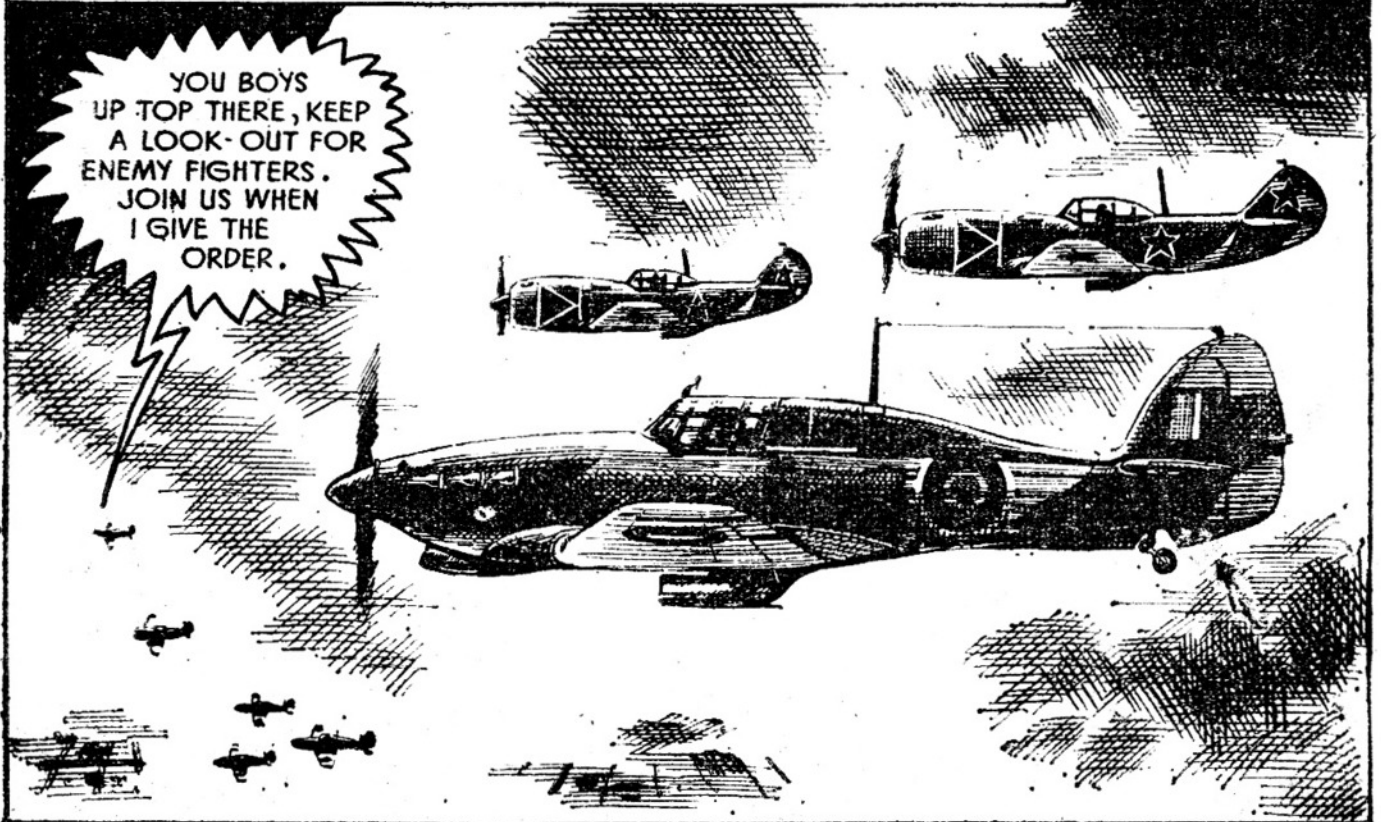
BALKOV TOWER, THIS IS AIR FORCE THREE-O-FOUR. RADIO CHECK AND TAXI CLEARANCE, OVER!

THREE-O-FOUR, YOU ARE CLEAR TO TAXI. THE VERY BEST OF LUCK, COMRADE!



HUNTER FOUND HIMSELF STRANGELY TOUCHED BY THE UNEXPECTED GOOD WISHES. A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE SQUADRON WAS AIRBORNE, HEADING FOR ITS FIRST OPERATION IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE. . .

YOU BOYS
UP TOP THERE, KEEP
A LOOK-OUT FOR
ENEMY FIGHTERS.
JOIN US WHEN
I GIVE THE
ORDER.



AS THE FIGHTERS DRONED THROUGH THE SMOKE-BLACKENED SKY, FLYING OFFICER HUNTER SCANNED THE HORIZON UNCEASINGLY, HIS EYES MOVING WITH MECHANICAL THOROUGHNESS ACROSS HIS WHOLE FIELD OF VISION. SUDDENLY, HE BROKE RADIO SILENCE. . .

SEVEN
ENEMY FIGHTERS,
TEN O'CLOCK, OUR
ANGELS. /



THE FLIGHT LEADER, MAJOR YEGOROV, SNAPPED QUICK ORDERS TO HIS PILOTS. SOMEHOW THEY MUST AVOID AN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ENEMY FIGHTERS...

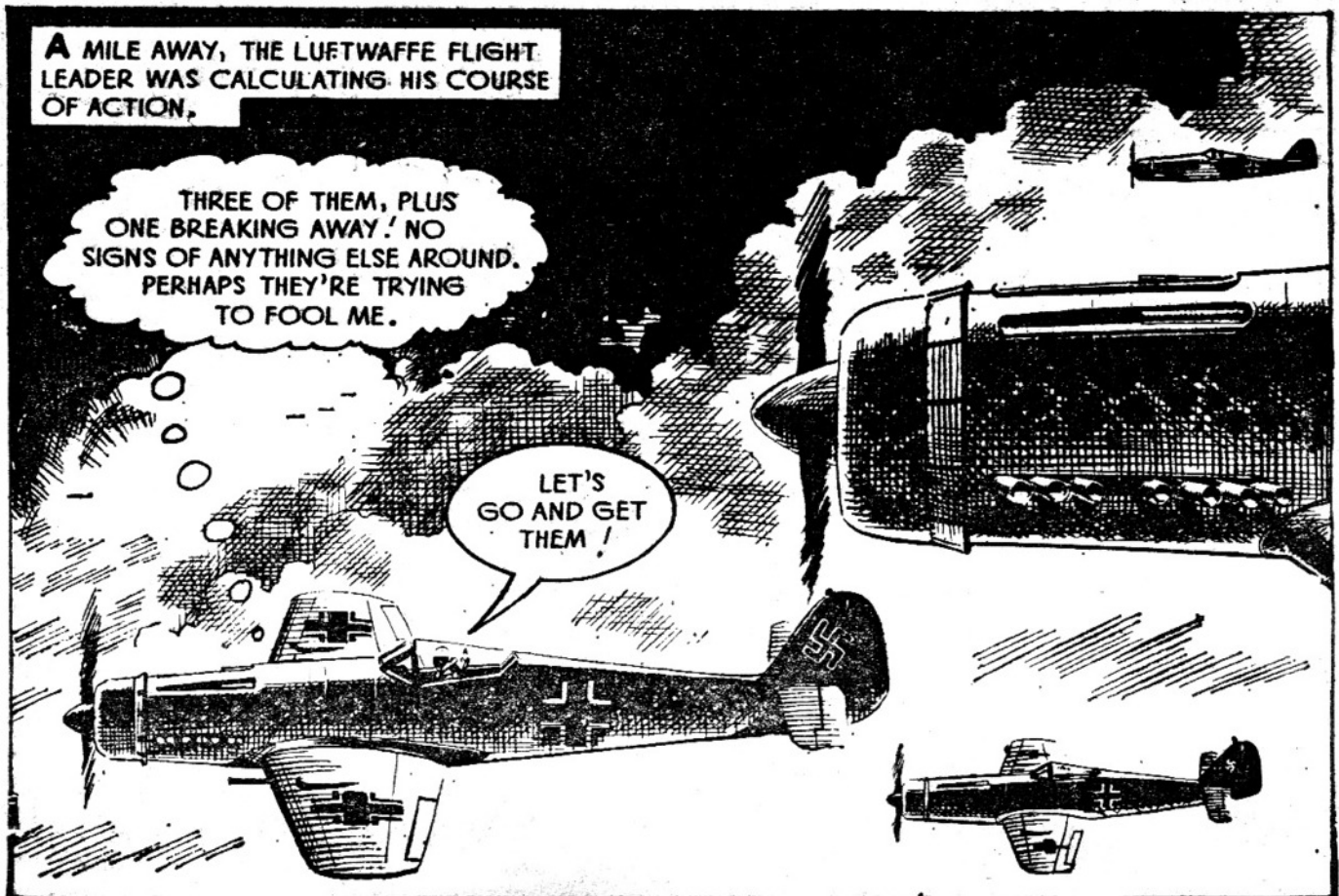
ALOV, DESCEND AND JOIN US DOWN HERE. OTHER COVER FIGHTERS MAINTAIN ALTITUDE AND ENGAGE THE ENEMY IF NECESSARY. LEAD THEM AWAY FROM US. OUT!



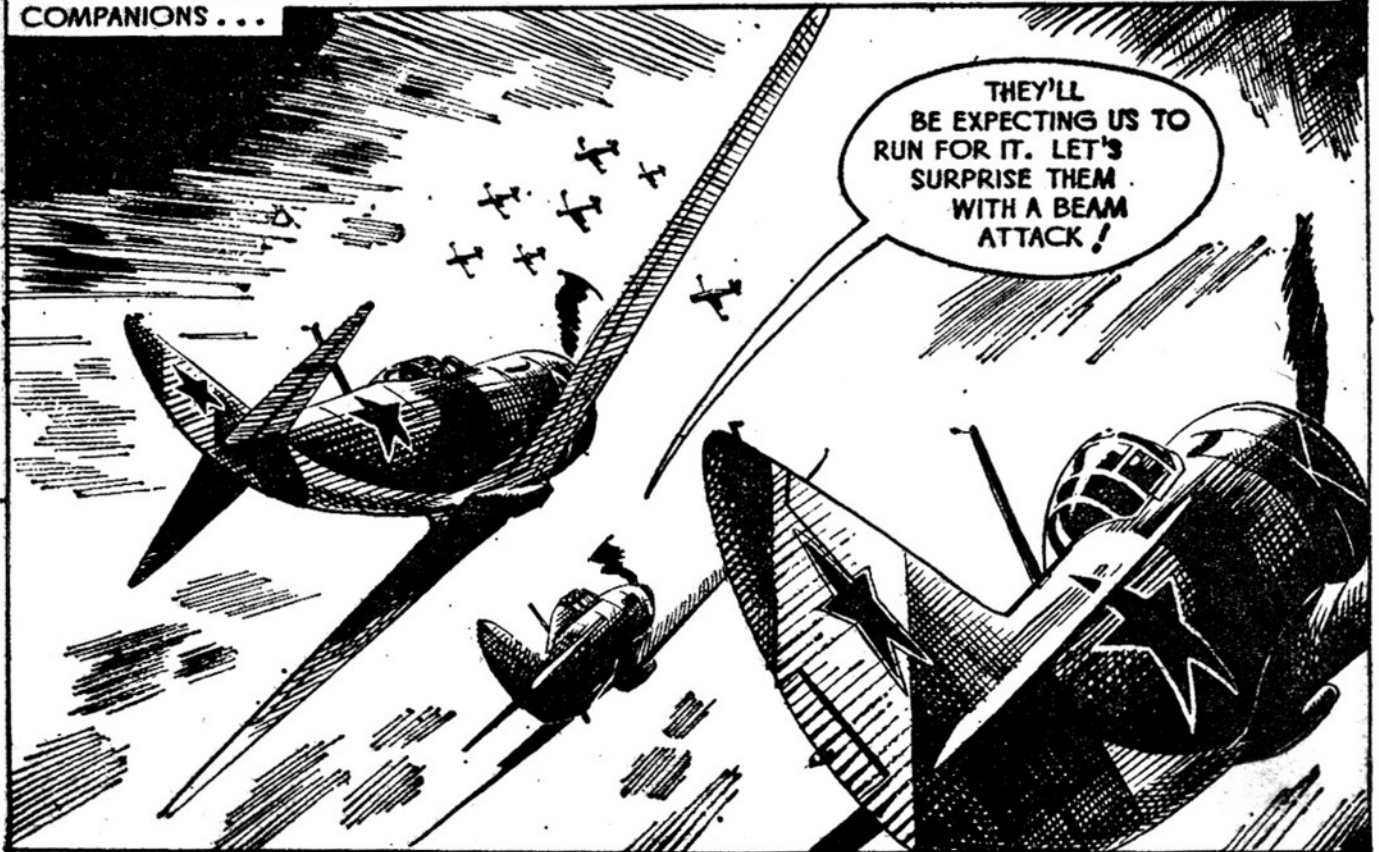
A MILE AWAY, THE LUFTWAFFE FLIGHT LEADER WAS CALCULATING HIS COURSE OF ACTION.

THREE OF THEM, PLUS ONE BREAKING AWAY! NO SIGNS OF ANYTHING ELSE AROUND. PERHAPS THEY'RE TRYING TO FOOL ME.

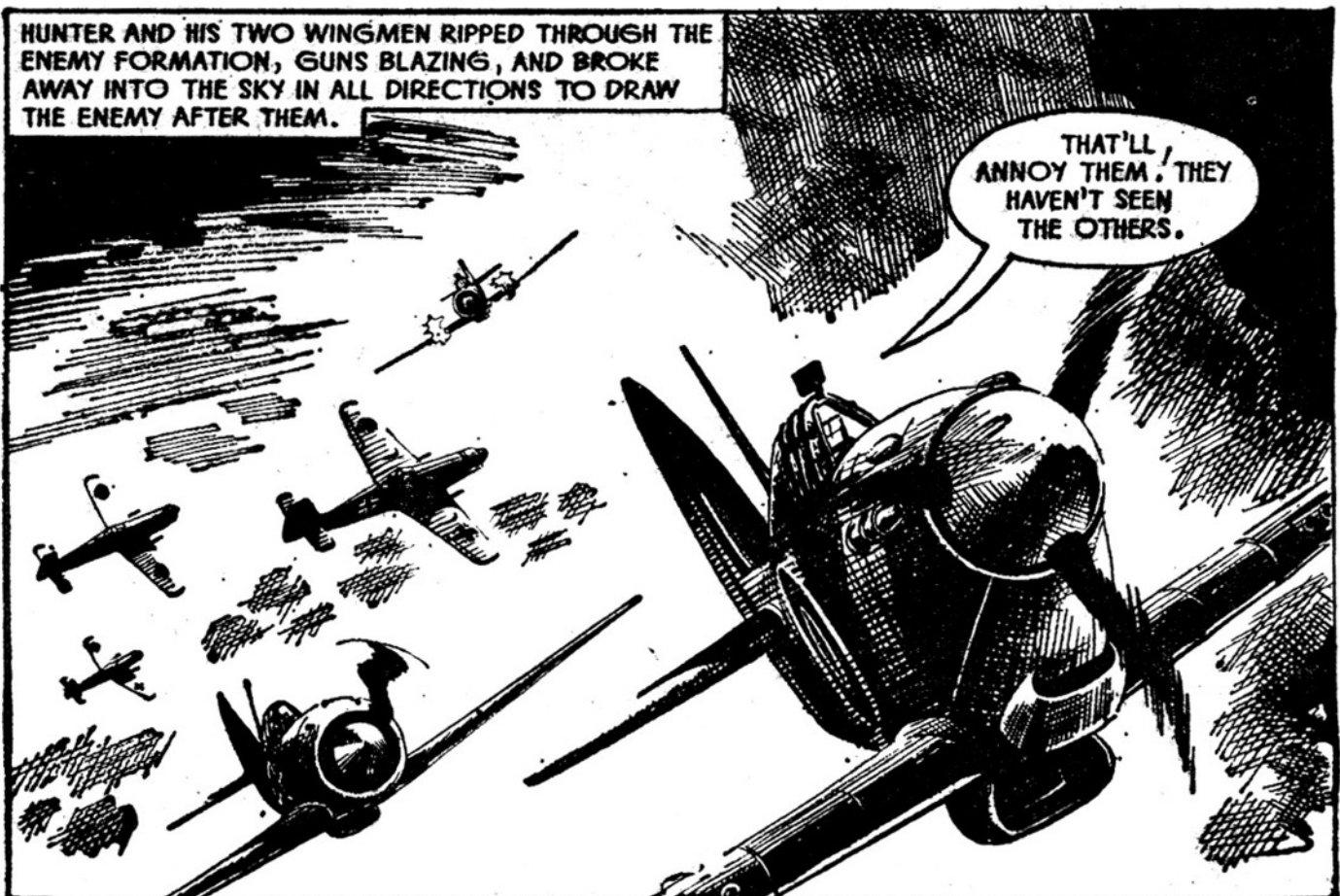
LET'S GO AND GET THEM!



HUNTER HAD BEEN WATCHING CLOSELY ALL THE TIME, AND AS SOON AS HE SAW THE ENEMY BANK TO OPEN THE ENGAGEMENT, HE WENT INTO A FAST, TIGHT TURN, FOLLOWED BY HIS TWO COMPANIONS . . .

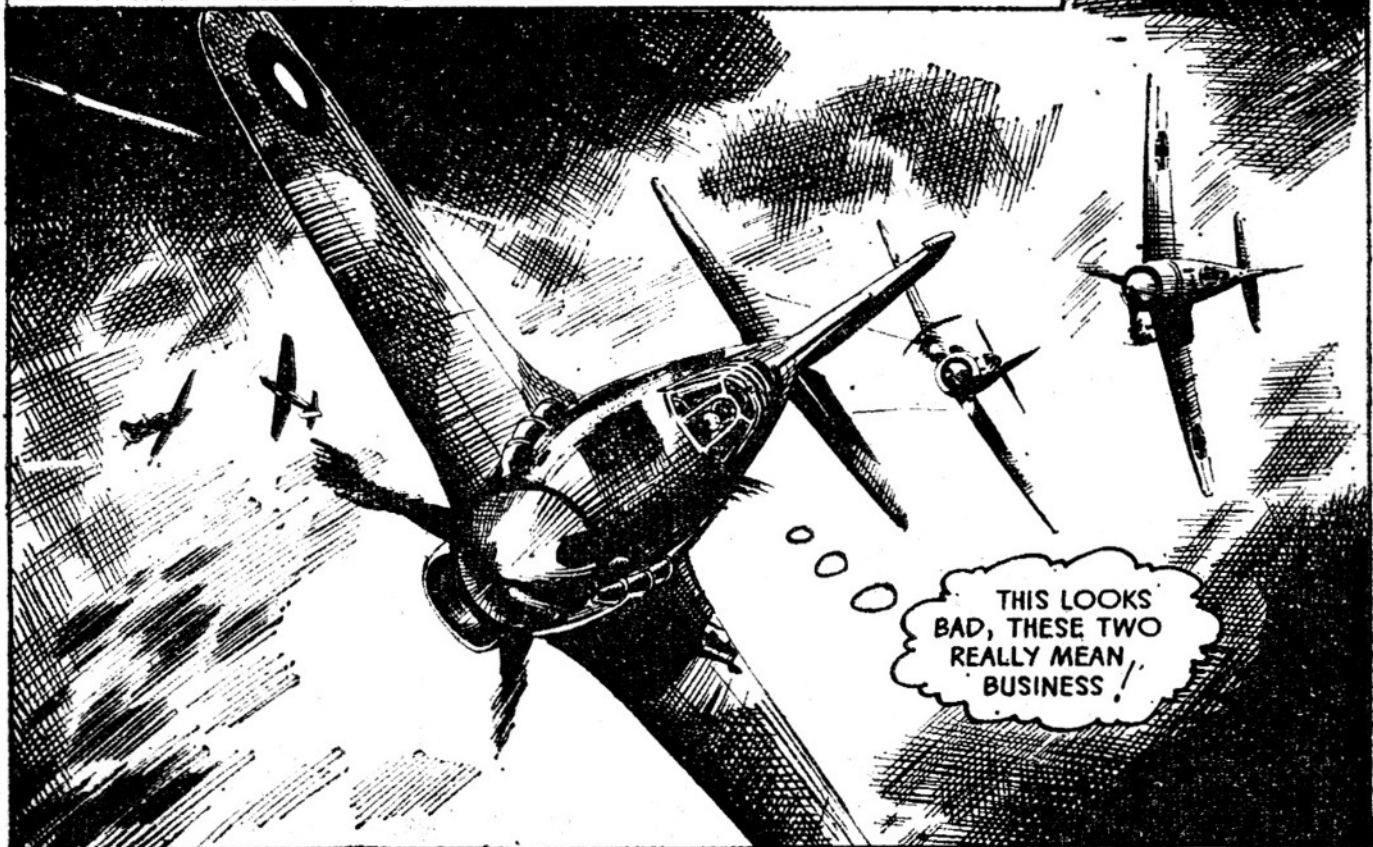


HUNTER AND HIS TWO WINGMEN RIPPED THROUGH THE ENEMY FORMATION, GUNS BLAZING, AND BROKE AWAY INTO THE SKY IN ALL DIRECTIONS TO DRAW THE ENEMY AFTER THEM.

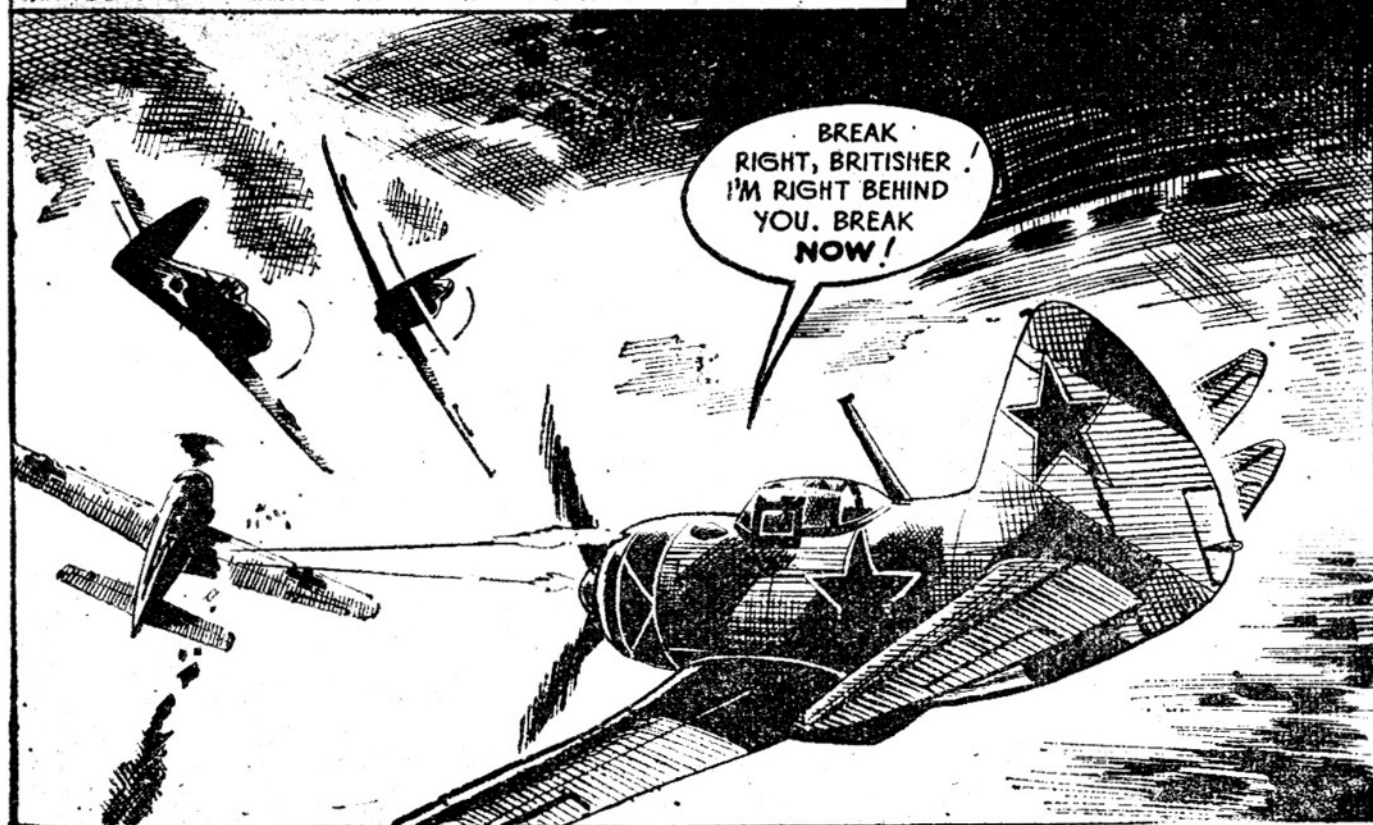


Umbrella in the Sky

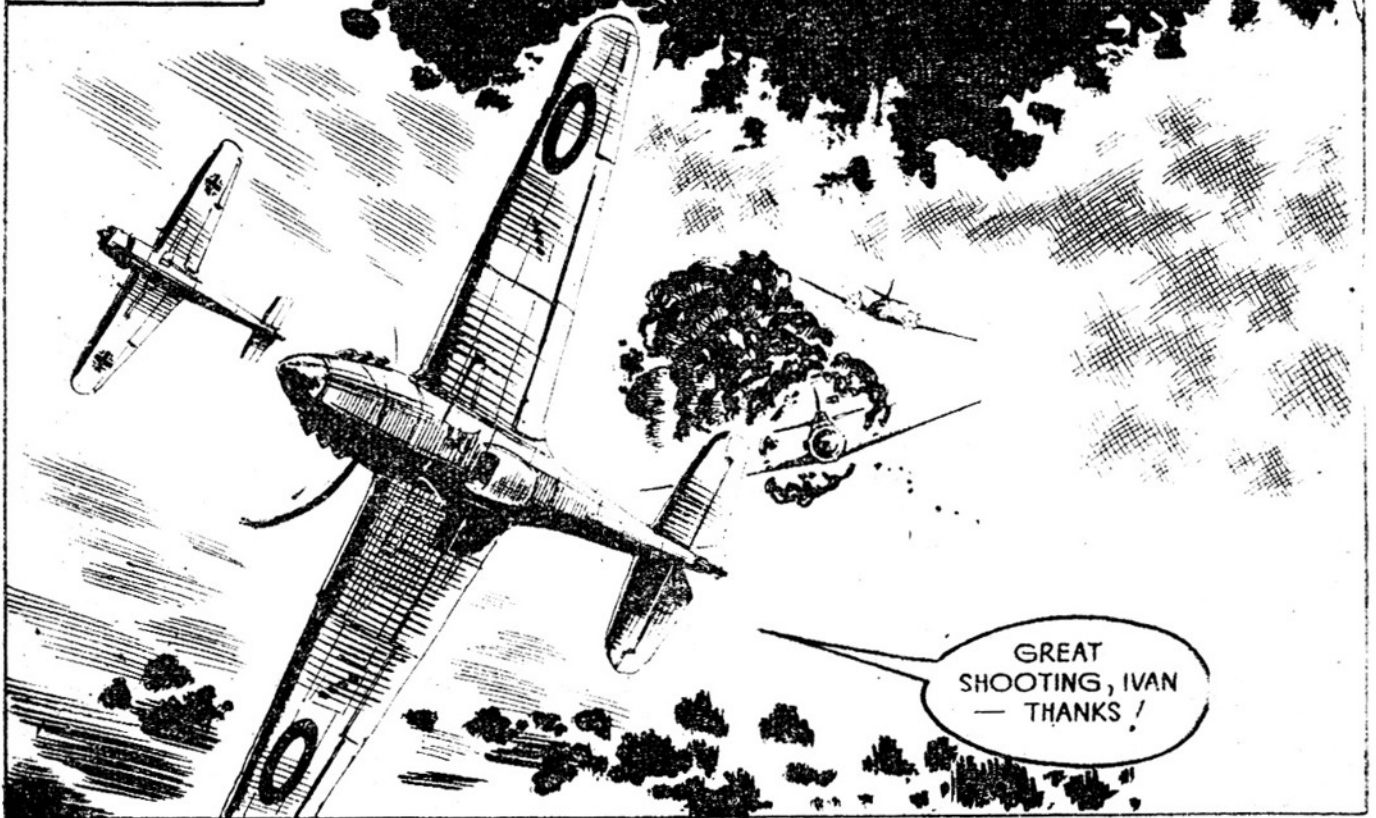
THE FOCKE WULF 190'S SWUNG ROUND ON THE THREE ALLIED FIGHTERS, AND SOON HUNTER FOUND TWO GRIMLY DETERMINED GERMANS ON HIS TAIL.



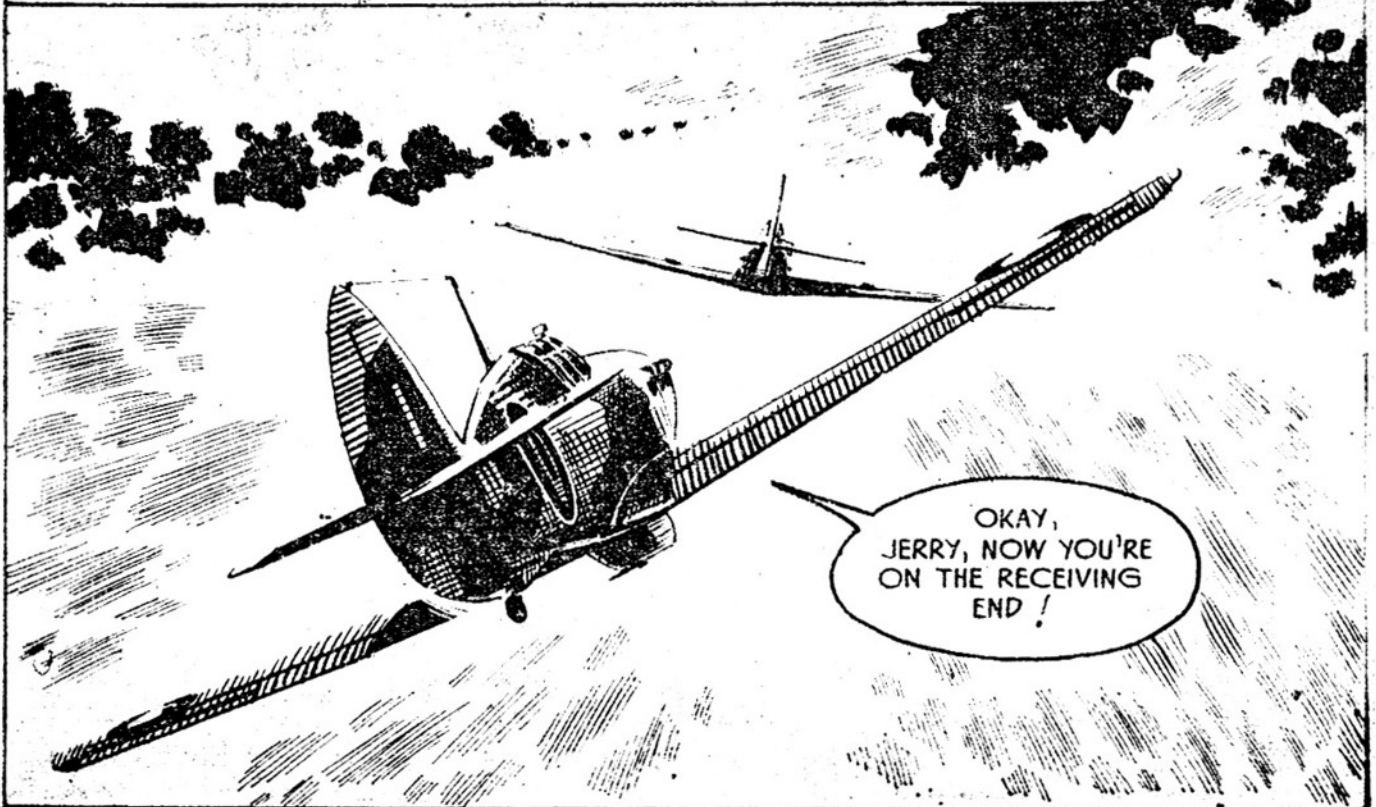
THE SKY WAS ALIVE WITH TWISTING AIRCRAFT. BUT EVEN SO, ON SEEING HUNTER'S DESPERATE PLIGHT, ONE OF THE RUSSIAN PILOTS MANOEUVRED VIOLENTLY THROUGH THE PACK TO COME TO HIS AID.



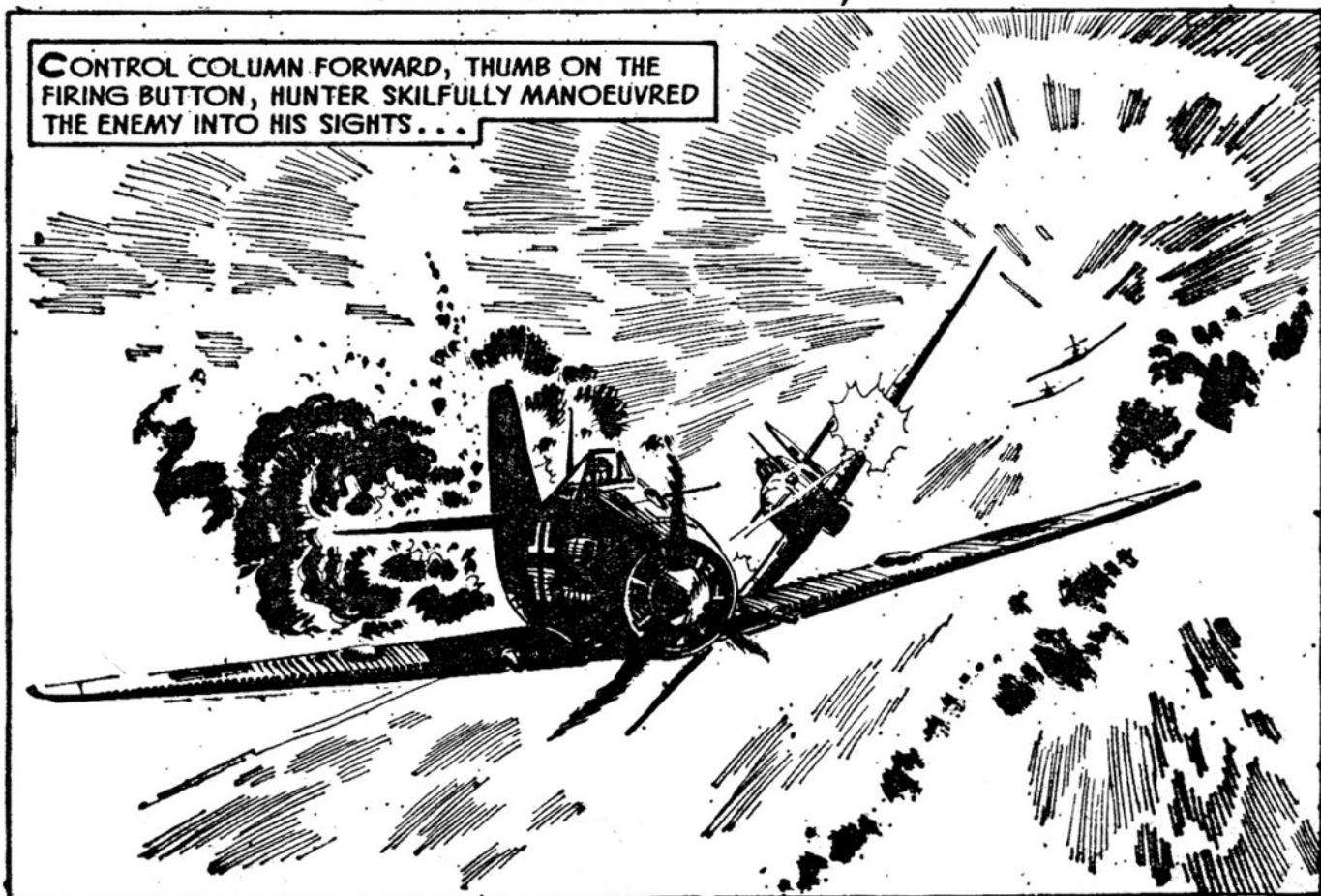
WITH SPLIT-SECOND RESPONSE; HUNTER FLUNG HIS AIRCRAFT ROUND AND AS IT ROCKETED SKYWARDS, HE SAW A BRIGHT FLASH OUT OF THE CORNER OF HIS GOGGLES . . .



BOB HUNTER WAS PRESSED HEAVILY INTO HIS SEAT UNDER THE BIG 'G' FORCES AND THROUGH THE GREY MIST THAT CLOUDED HIS EYES, HE VAGUELY SAW THE SHAPE OF THE FOCKE WULF WHICH HAD SO RECENTLY BEEN ON HIS TAIL.

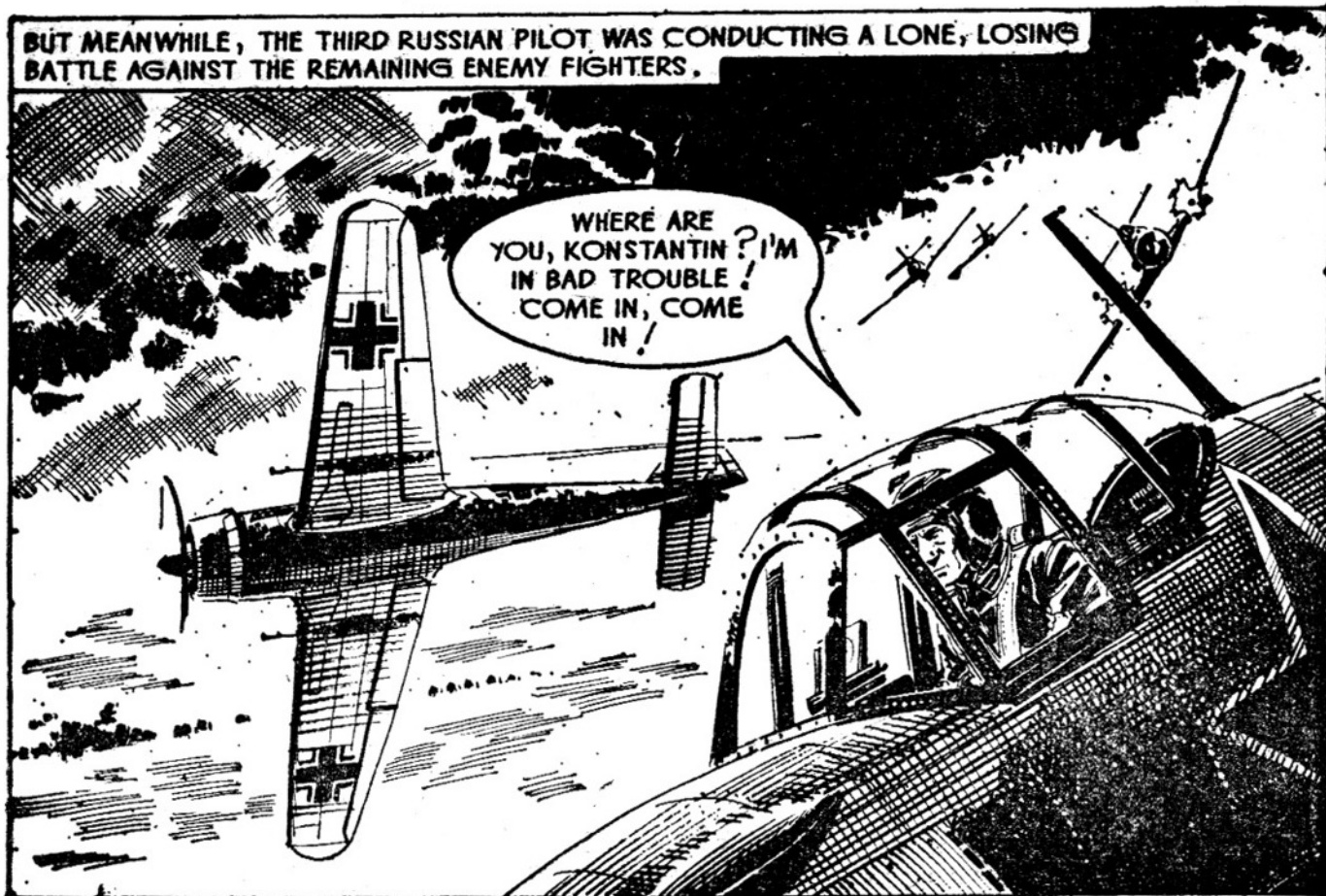


CONTROL COLUMN FORWARD, THUMB ON THE FIRING BUTTON, HUNTER SKILFULLY MANOEUVRED THE ENEMY INTO HIS SIGHTS...

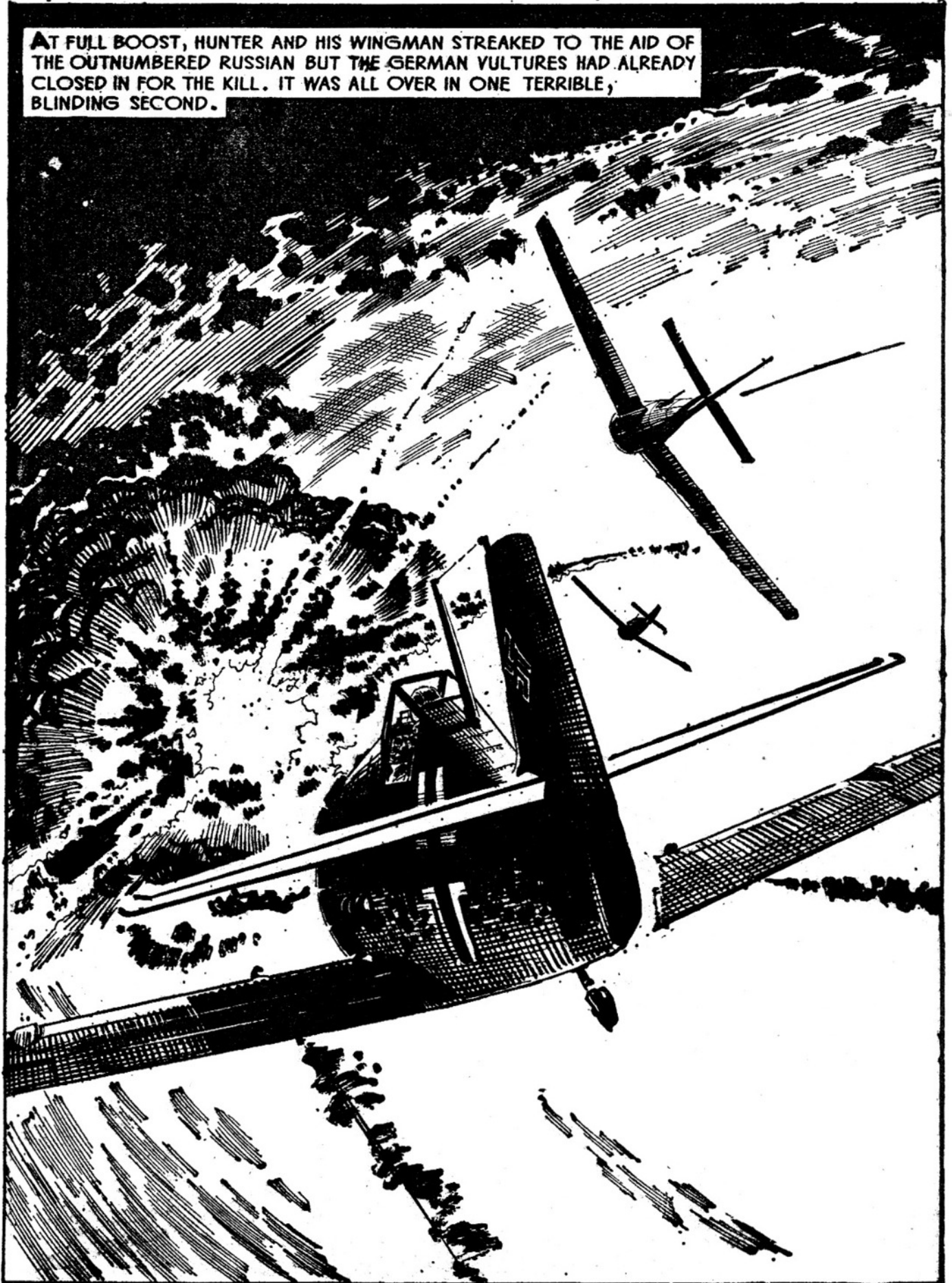


BUT MEANWHILE, THE THIRD RUSSIAN PILOT WAS CONDUCTING A LONE, LOSING BATTLE AGAINST THE REMAINING ENEMY FIGHTERS.

WHERE ARE YOU, KONSTANTIN? I'M IN BAD TROUBLE! COME IN, COME IN!



AT FULL BOOST, HUNTER AND HIS WINGMAN STREAKED TO THE AID OF THE OUTNUMBERED RUSSIAN BUT THE GERMAN VULTURES HAD ALREADY CLOSED IN FOR THE KILL. IT WAS ALL OVER IN ONE TERRIBLE, BLINDING SECOND.



Umbrella in the Sky

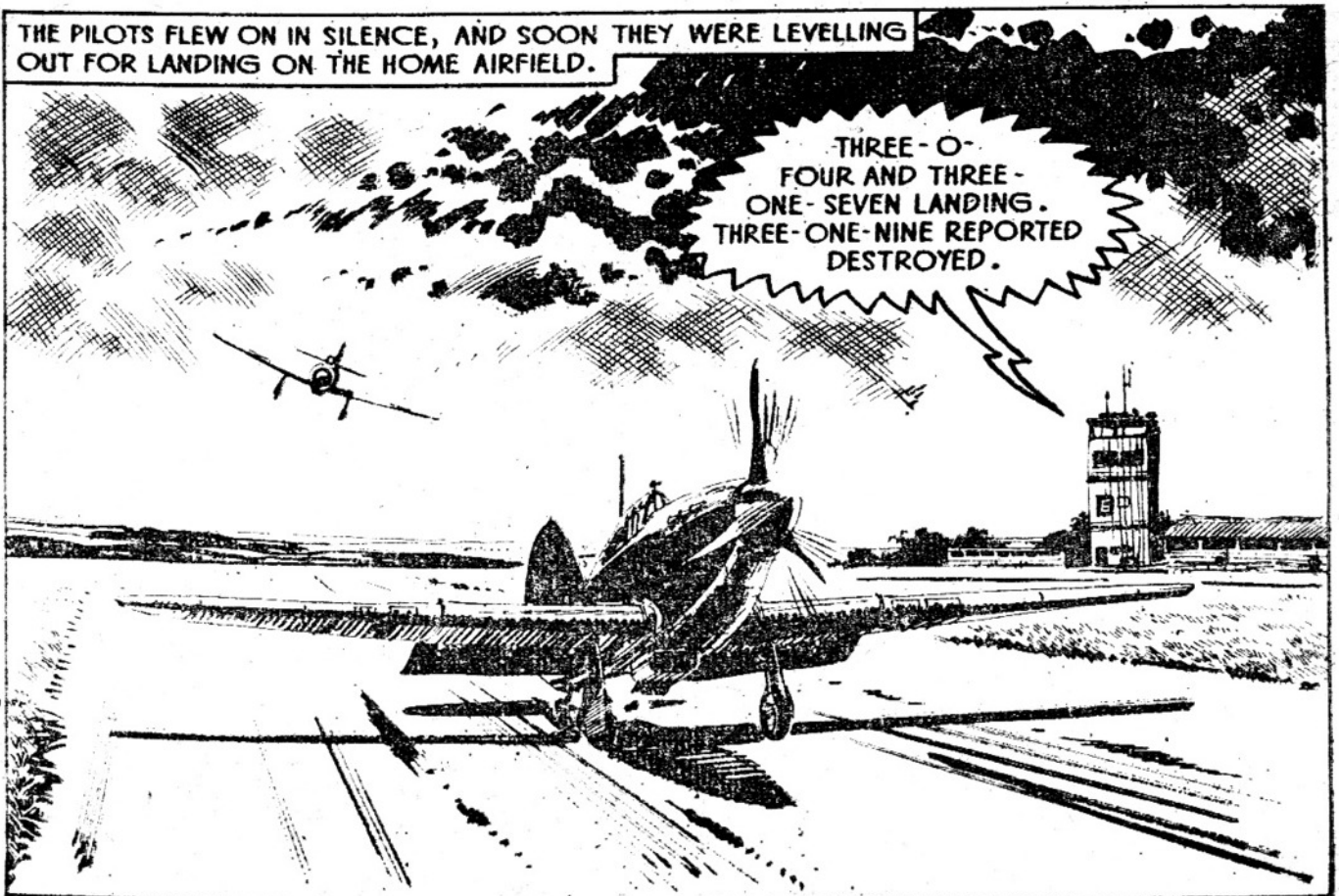
THE AIR BATTLE HAD LASTED FOR BARELY THREE MINUTES AND ONLY THE SMOKE FROM THE EXPLOSION HUNG IN THE SKY LIKE A DARK GHOST AS EVIDENCE OF ITS SHORT-LIVED FURY.

I'M EXTREMELY SORRY ABOUT YOUR MAN. I'M AFRAID HE DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE WHILE WE WERE BUSY.

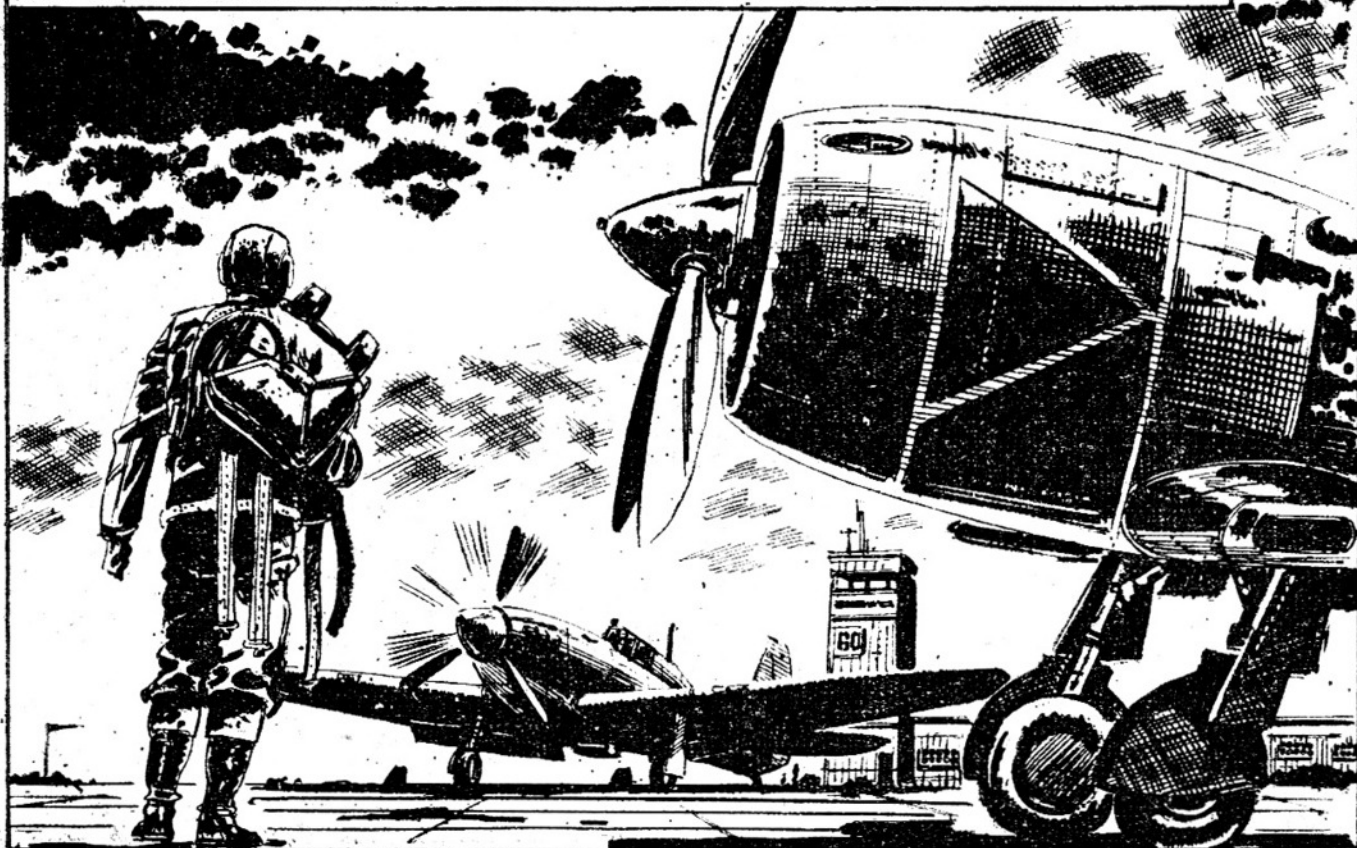
WAR IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS, COMRADE. HE WAS A GOOD FIGHTER. HE DIED AS A MAN SHOULD!

THE PILOTS FLEW ON IN SILENCE, AND SOON THEY WERE LEVELLING OUT FOR LANDING ON THE HOME AIRFIELD.

THREE-O-FOUR AND THREE-ONE-SEVEN LANDING. THREE-ONE-NINE REPORTED DESTROYED.



THE RUSSIAN, LIEUTENANT SAVCHENKO, TAXIED OFF THE RUNWAY, SHUT DOWN HIS ENGINE, AND WENT TO ESCORT HIS R.A.F. WINGMAN BACK TO THE BRIEFING HUT...



SAVCHENKO WALKED OVER TO THE HURRICANE AND SUDDENLY STOPPED DEAD IN HIS TRACKS, STARING BLANKLY AT THE EQUALLY ASTONISHED FACE OF FLYING OFFICER HUNTER. UNTIL THAT MOMENT, NEITHER HAD REALISED THE IDENTITY OF THE OTHER...



HUNTER!
I LEFT MY
COMRADE TO
ASSIST THIS
CLOWN!

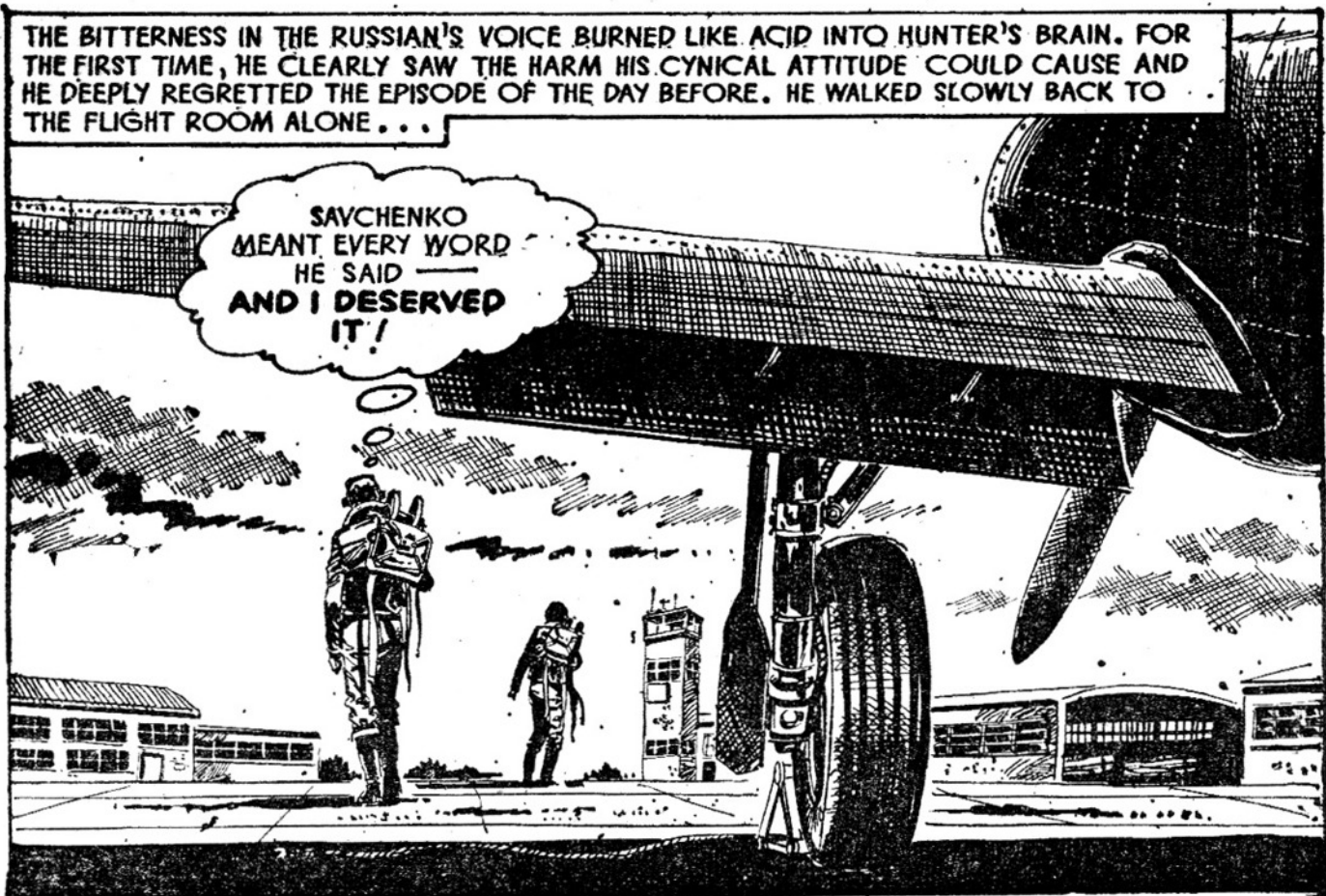
LIEUTENANT SAVCHENKO COULD NOT CONTAIN HIS ANGER . . .

SO MY
COMRADE DIED WHILE
I WAS HELPING **YOU!** HAD
I KNOWN IT WAS YOU,
I WOULD HAVE LEFT YOU
TO FIGHT YOUR **OWN**
BATTLE!



THE BITTERNESS IN THE RUSSIAN'S VOICE BURNED LIKE ACID INTO HUNTER'S BRAIN. FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE CLEARLY SAW THE HARM HIS CYNICAL ATTITUDE COULD CAUSE AND HE DEEPLY REGRETTED THE EPISODE OF THE DAY BEFORE. HE WALKED SLOWLY BACK TO THE FLIGHT ROOM ALONE . . .

SAVCHENKO
MEANT EVERY WORD
HE SAID —
AND I DESERVED
IT!



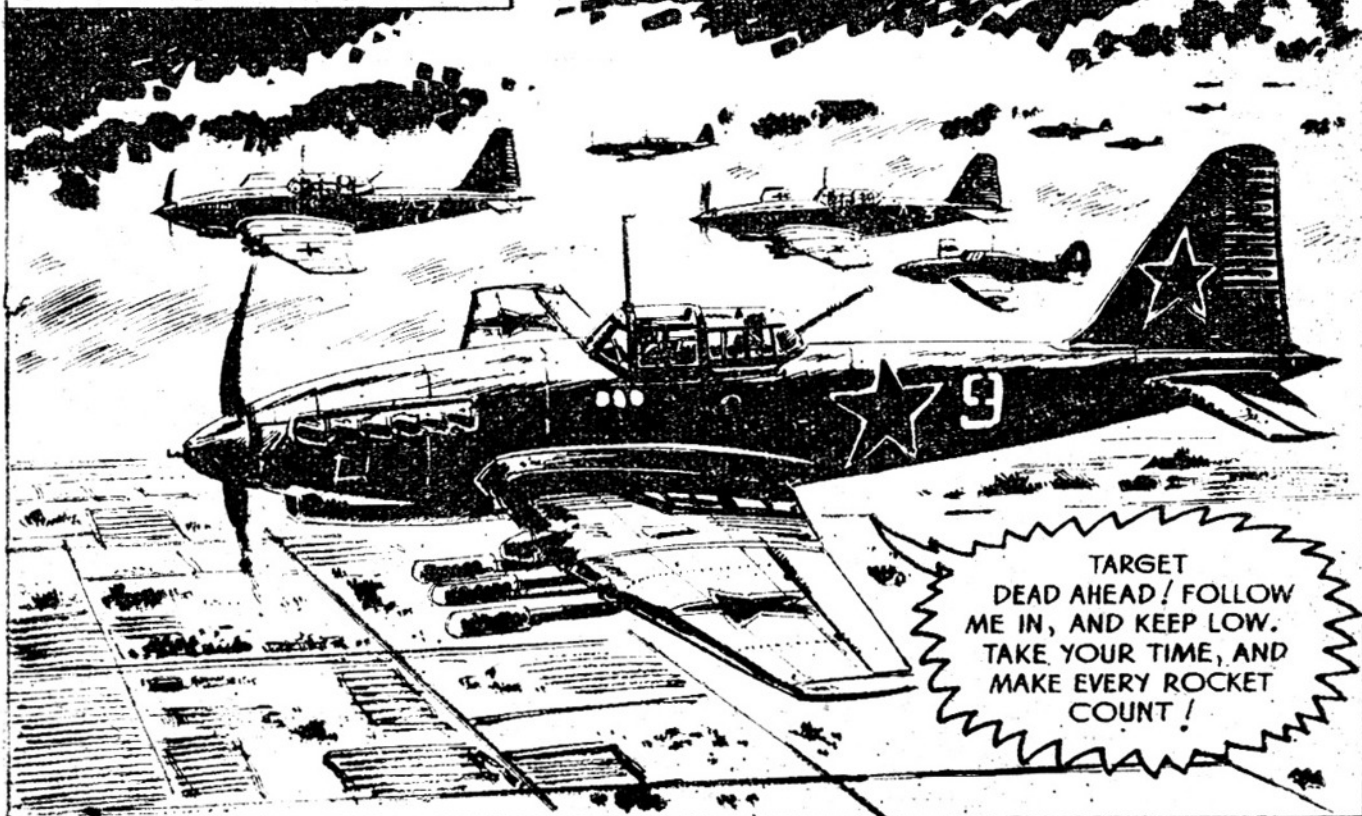
Chapter 3. HURRICANES!

MEANWHILE THE SUPPORT FORCE OF FIVE FIGHTERS FROM WHICH HUNTER AND HIS COMPANIONS HAD BEEN DETACHED, WAS FAST NEARING THE BATTLE AREA, AND SOVIET TANK CREWS LOOKED IMPATIENTLY SKYWARD FOR THEIR PROMISED ILIUCHIN "STORMOVIK" DIVE-BOMBER COVER...

WHERE
ARE THOSE AIRCRAFT?
WE ARE ONLY THREE
MILES FROM THE
ENEMY NOW, AND
WE'RE GOING TO
NEED THOSE
BOMBERS
BADLY!



FIGHTERS AND DIVE-BOMBERS MADE THEIR RENDEZVOUS DEAD ON TIME AND THE FORCE IMMEDIATELY TOOK UP POSITIONS FOR THE ATTACK ON THE ENEMY ARMoured COLUMNS...



THE NOSE OF THE LEADING STORMOVIK DIPPED, ITS ENGINE NOTE RISING TO A HIGH-PITCHED WAIL AS THE THROTTLE WAS OPENED. AND THEN THE ROCKETS STREAKED DOWNWARDS — TO RIP THE GERMAN ARMoured GIANTS APART AS IF THEY WERE MADE OF TIN-FOIL.



A LOUD CHEER WENT UP FROM THE DEFENDING RUSSIAN TANK CREWS AS THE AIR REVERBERATED TO THE ROAR OF FRIENDLY AIRCRAFT. THEY SOON BECAME AWARE OF THE UNUSUAL SHAPE OF SOME OF THE FIGHTERS, AND SLOWLY THE WORD SPREAD AMONG THE ADVANCING INFANTRYMEN . . .



THE AIRCRAFT HAD STRUCK THE OPENING BLOW AND THE SOVIET TANKS BEGAN TO ROLL FORWARD MENACINGLY. SOON A MASSIVE TANK BATTLE HAD DEVELOPED. THE RUSSIAN COUNTER-ATTACK WAS GOING WELL . . .





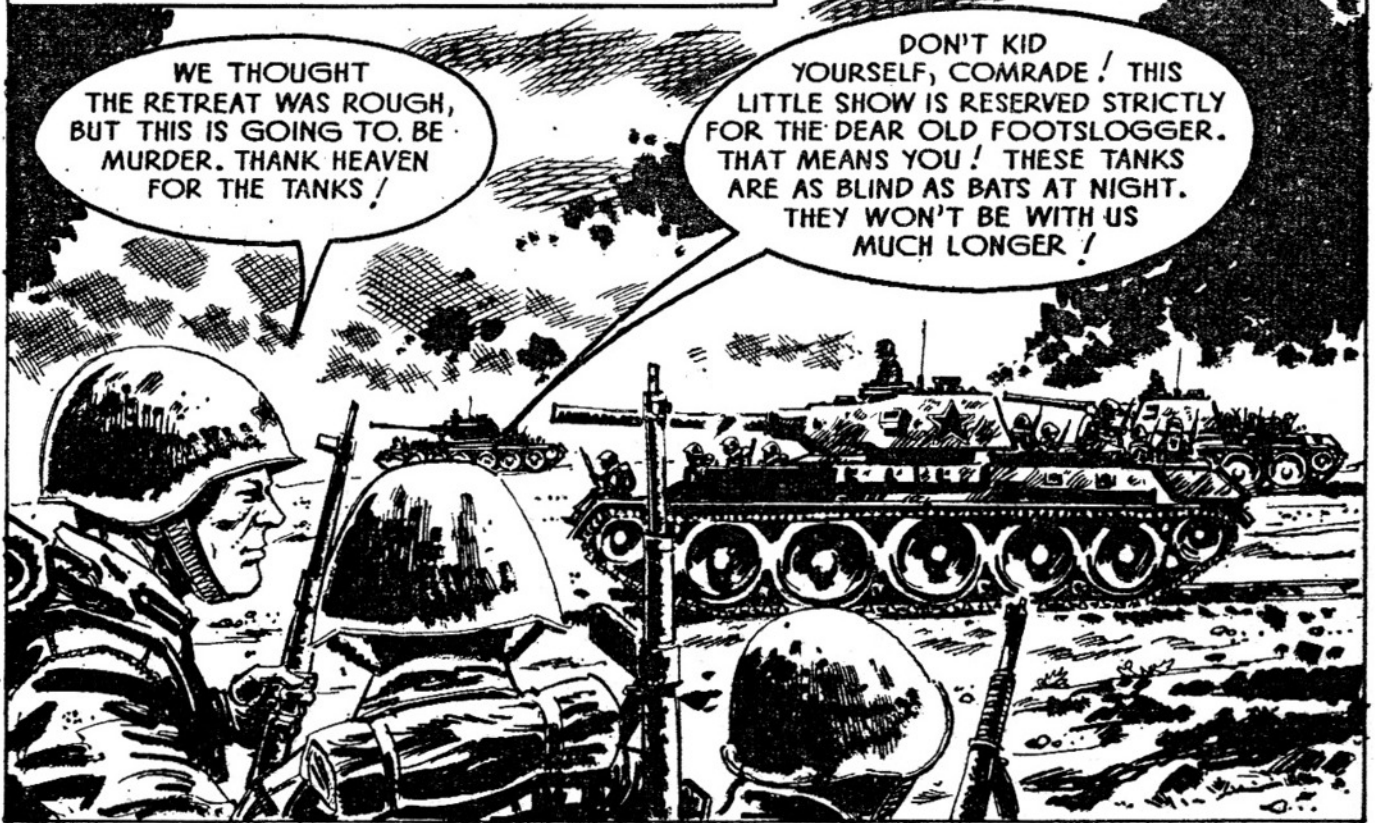
WITH THE MAIN ENEMY BATTLE FORCE GIVING GROUND, AND ISOLATED POCKETS OF GERMAN TANKS BATTLING DESPERATELY TO CONTAIN THE MASSIVE RUSSIAN COUNTER-ATTACK, THE SCENE WAS SET FOR THE DRIVE TO THE MAIN OBJECTIVE, THE VILLAGE OF KRUSLOV...



THE VETERAN MAJOR SAROV KNEW ONLY TOO WELL THAT THE BATTLE WAS JUST BEGINNING. THE SPECTACULAR REPULSION OF THE ENEMY TANK ATTACK HAD MERELY OPENED THE WAY FOR THE MAIN CLASH OF THE DAY.

WE THOUGHT THE RETREAT WAS ROUGH, BUT THIS IS GOING TO BE MURDER. THANK HEAVEN FOR THE TANKS!

DON'T KID YOURSELF, COMRADE! THIS LITTLE SHOW IS RESERVED STRICTLY FOR THE DEAR OLD FOOTSLOGGER. THAT MEANS YOU! THESE TANKS ARE AS BLIND AS BATS AT NIGHT. THEY WON'T BE WITH US MUCH LONGER!



AN HOUR PASSED — THE AIRCRAFT HAD LONG SINCE FINISHED THEIR JOB, AND HAD RETURNED TO BASE — THE EVENING COUNTRYSIDE WAS THROBBING WITH THE RUMBLE OF DISTANT GUNS AND THE RATTLE OF MACHINE-GUNS. THE BATTLE AREA WAS NEAR...

ALL RIGHT, EVERYBODY OFF. KRUSLOV IS TWO MILES AWAY. SPREAD OUT, AND WATCH FOR ENEMY FOXHOLES ALL THE WAY...



Umbrella in the Sky

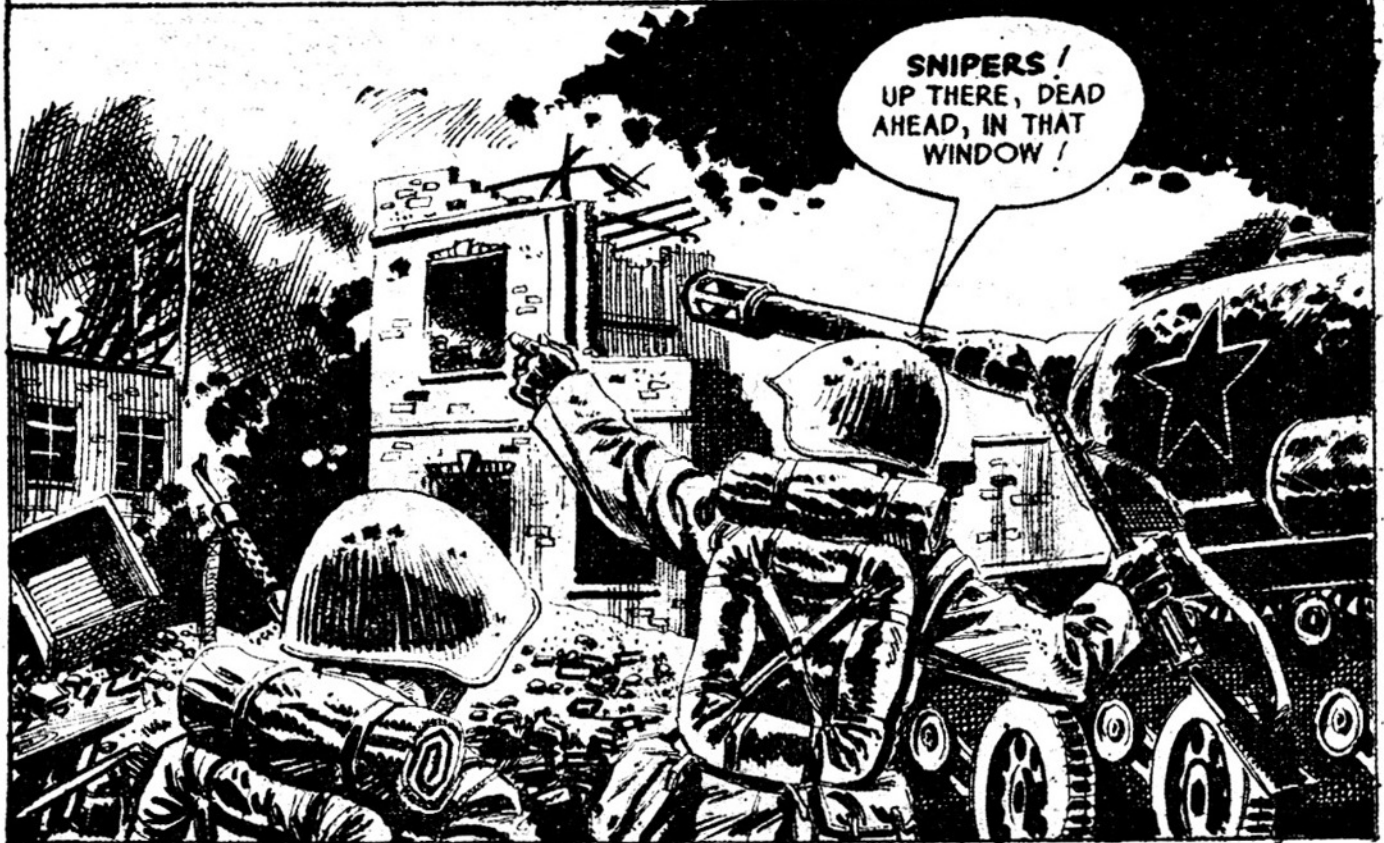
THE TANKS WERE LUMBERING FORWARD SLOWLY NOW WITH THE GAUNT SHAPES OF DAMAGED BUILDINGS LOOMING UP THROUGH THE DUSK. AS THE INFANTRYMEN MOVED UP WITH THE TANKS, HEAVY ENEMY SHELLFIRE GREETED THEM . . .

HERE IT COMES! GET DOWN, AND HOLD TILL IT EASES OFF. THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE US FOR MUCH LONGER, COMRADES, THE LIGHT'S GOING FAST.



DESPITE THE APPALLING BARRAGE, THE SOVIET INFANTRYMEN REACHED THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE SHATTERED RUIN THAT WAS ONCE KRUSLOV. SUDDENLY, A SHRILL CRY WENT UP . . .

SNIPERS!
UP THERE, DEAD
AHEAD, IN THAT
WINDOW!



EVEN AS THE ALARM WAS GIVEN, THE MONOTONOUS THUDDING OF THE MACHINE-GUN BEGAN, SENDING DEATH RIPPING INTO THE GROUP OF RUSSIANS.



BUT ANOTHER RUSSIAN TANK EDGED FORWARD AND A STREAM OF BULLETS FROM ITS GUN CARVED A LINE UP THE WALL UNTIL THE SNIPERS WERE SILENCED.



THE TANKS WERE GROPEING THEIR WAY AWKWARDLY OVER THE RUBBLE-STREWN STREETS. THEY WERE EASY, BULKY TARGETS FOR HIDDEN GERMAN "PANZERFAUST" ANTI-TANK WEAPONS IN THE DUSK...



Umbrella in the Sky

BY THE TIME DARKNESS HAD FALLEN, EVERY SOVIET TANK HAD LEFT EMBATTLED KRUSLOV. IT WAS LEFT TO THE SOVIET INFANTRYMEN TO MOP UP THE VILLAGE.



FOR HALF THE NIGHT, THE GRUELLING BATTLE AGAINST THE UNSEEN ENEMY WENT ON, AND FINALLY A LARGE PART OF THE VILLAGE HAD BEEN OCCUPIED BY RUSSIAN TROOPS, AND THE LAST SNIPERS WERE BEING FERRERED OUT...





MEANWHILE, AT BALKOV FIGHTER AIRFIELD, THE PILOTS OF THE SUCCESSFUL SUPPORT SORTIE CELEBRATED IN THE MESS. FLIGHT LIEUTENANT NELSON WAS PROUD OF THE GOOD PERFORMANCE OF HIS PILOTS . . .

WE HAVE JUST HAD NEWS, THAT SOVIET TROOPS HAVE RETAKEN KRUSLOV. SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR BRITISH FRIENDS FOR THEIR PART IN THE OPERATION. TWO PILOTS OF THIS WING, LIEUTENANT SAVCHENKO, AND FLYING OFFICER HUNTER SHOT DOWN ENEMY AIRCRAFT, BRINGING OUR TOTAL TO THIRTY-SIX ENEMY AIRCRAFT DESTROYED !



Umbrella in the Sky

... ONE OF OUR PILOTS WAS LOST. COMRADE LIEUTENANT BUNEYEV WAS KILLED IN ACTION TODAY. THE SPIRIT OF THIS YOUNG MAN OF NINETEEN, WHO HAD SEVEN ENEMY AIRCRAFT TO HIS CREDIT, IS AN EXAMPLE AND AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL.



COMRADE LIEUTENANT BUNEYEV WAS A GOOD FRIEND TO ALL OF US, AND A GREAT ASSET TO THIS WING. HE WILL BE SADLY MISSED.



ON THE FOLLOWING MORNING, HUNTER WAS TAKING DOWN METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION IN NELSON'S OFFICE. THE FLIGHT LIEUTENANT HAD NOTICED THAT HUNTER WAS OBVIOUSLY DISTURBED ABOUT SOMETHING, AND HE MADE A TACTFUL LEAD...

YESTERDAY'S BAG MAKES YOUR GRAND TOTAL SIX, BOB! HOW DID IT GO?

AS FAR AS THE SCORE GOES, NOT BAD. BUT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF FLYING OFFICER HUNTER, R. A. F. PILOT ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT, IT WAS A COMPLETE WRITE-OFF!



SLOWLY, HUNTER TOLD OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LED TO THE SHOOTING DOWN OF THE RUSSIAN PILOT. NELSON COULD SEE THAT HUNTER WAS VERY MUCH ALONE IN HIS PROBLEM BUT HE TRIED TO EASE THE OTHER'S MIND. . .

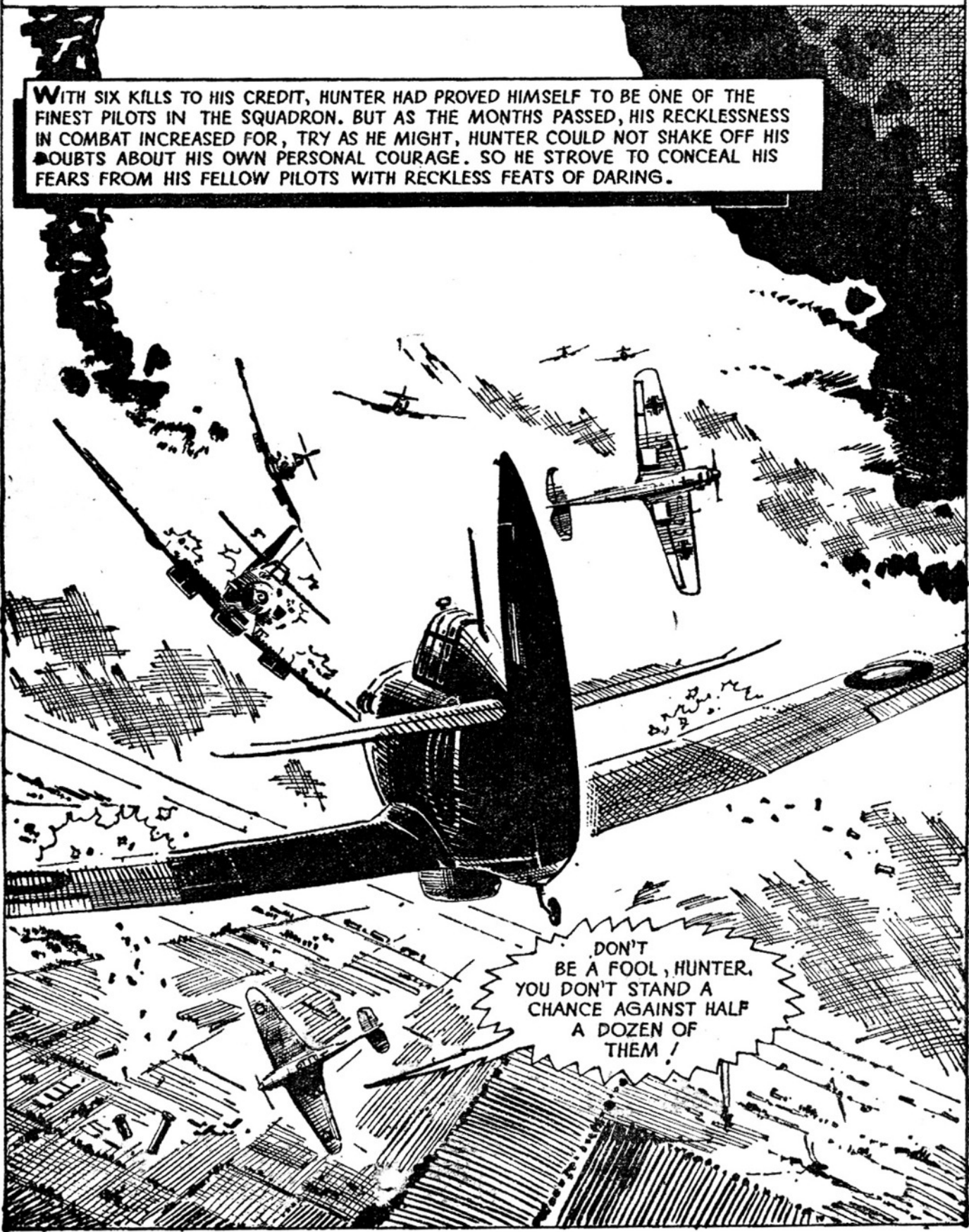


SO ENDED THE FIRST OF HUNDREDS OF OPERATIONS MADE BY THE R.A.F. VISITORS IN RUSSIA. IN THE MONTHS TO COME, THEY WERE TO PROVE THEMSELVES EXCELLENT PILOTS AND POPULAR ALLIES, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF FLYING OFFICER HUNTER. . . THE MAN WITH A LOT OF ICE TO CRACK!



Chapter 4. THE SUPREME TEST

WITH SIX KILLS TO HIS CREDIT, HUNTER HAD PROVED HIMSELF TO BE ONE OF THE FINEST PILOTS IN THE SQUADRON. BUT AS THE MONTHS PASSED, HIS RECKLESSNESS IN COMBAT INCREASED FOR, TRY AS HE MIGHT, HUNTER COULD NOT SHAKE OFF HIS DOUBTS ABOUT HIS OWN PERSONAL COURAGE. SO HE STROVE TO CONCEAL HIS FEARS FROM HIS FELLOW PILOTS WITH RECKLESS FEATS OF DARING.



DON'T
BE A FOOL, HUNTER.
YOU DON'T STAND A
CHANCE AGAINST HALF
A DOZEN OF
THEM!

BUT HUNTER'S TACTICS HAD NOT DECEIVED THE VETERAN, MAJOR YEGOROV. THE RUSSIAN UNDERSTOOD WHY HUNTER HAD ABANDONED HIMSELF TO THE FORTUNES OF CHANCE, AND HE REALISED THAT HUNTER WOULD HAVE TO FIND HIS OWN SOLUTION TO HIS PROBLEM. YEGOROV BELIEVED IN HIM, HOWEVER...

HUNTER, THIS IS OUR NEW MAN, LIEUTENANT ZHILIN. HE WILL BE JOINING THE WING ON THE SUPPORT MISSION PLANNED FOR LATER TODAY. KEEP AN EYE ON HIM, WILL YOU?

I'LL BE GLAD TO LOOK OUT FOR YOU, ZHILIN. DON'T TRY ANYTHING AMBITIOUS, LEAVE ALL THAT FOR LATER!



THE ADVICE SOUNDED STRANGE COMING FROM HUNTER. HE ADVOCATED CAUTION, BUT NEVER PRACTISED IT. THAT AFTERNOON, AS THE SQUADRON HEADED FOR THE BATTLE AREA, ZHILIN, WAS WEAVING UNEASILY IN FRONT OF HUNTER'S NOSE, TRYING HIS BEST TO MAINTAIN FORMATION...

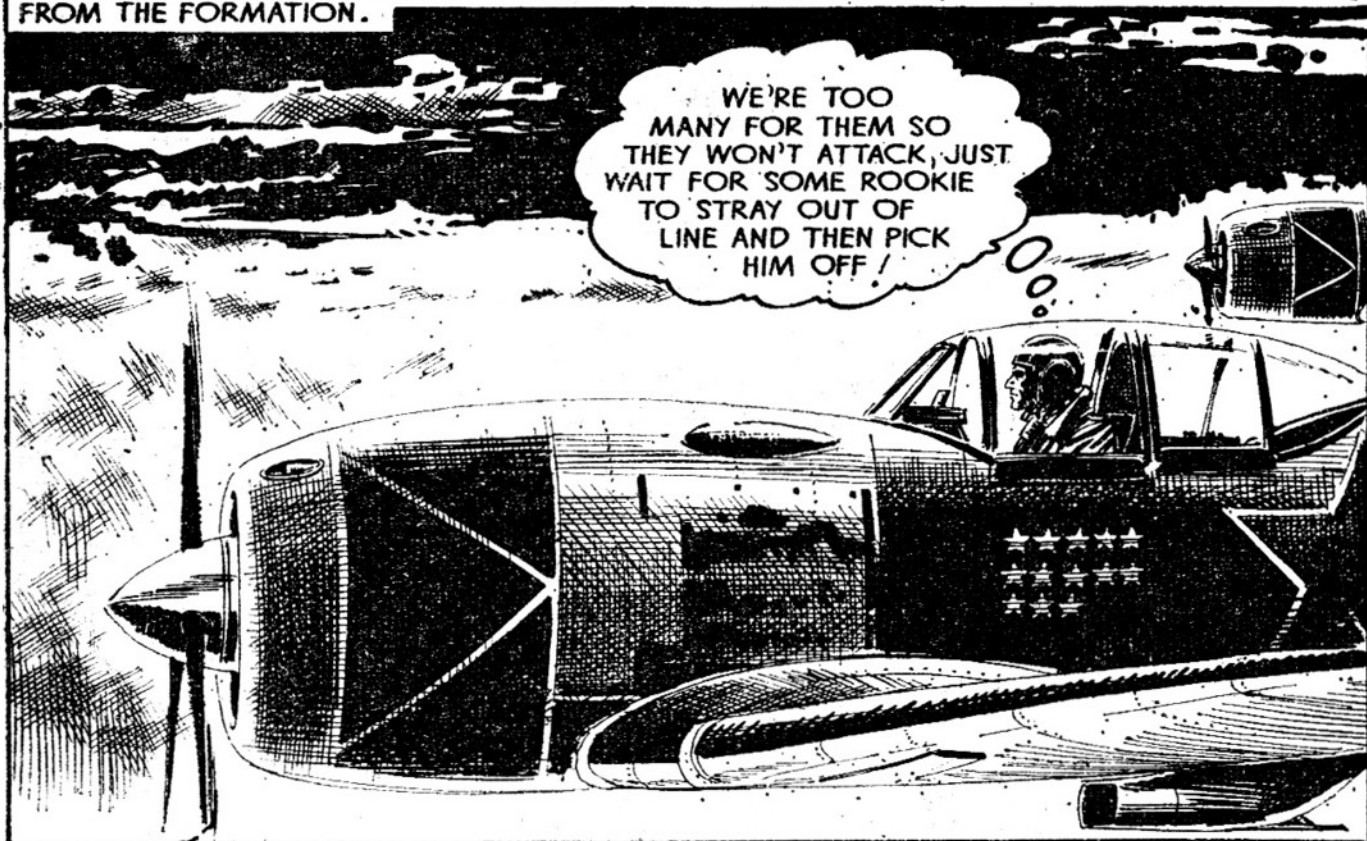


NOW TAKE IT EASY, ZHILIN, DON'T KEEP JUGGLING THE THROTTLE. JUST SETTLE DOWN AND LET HER FLY HERSELF.

Umbrella In the Sky

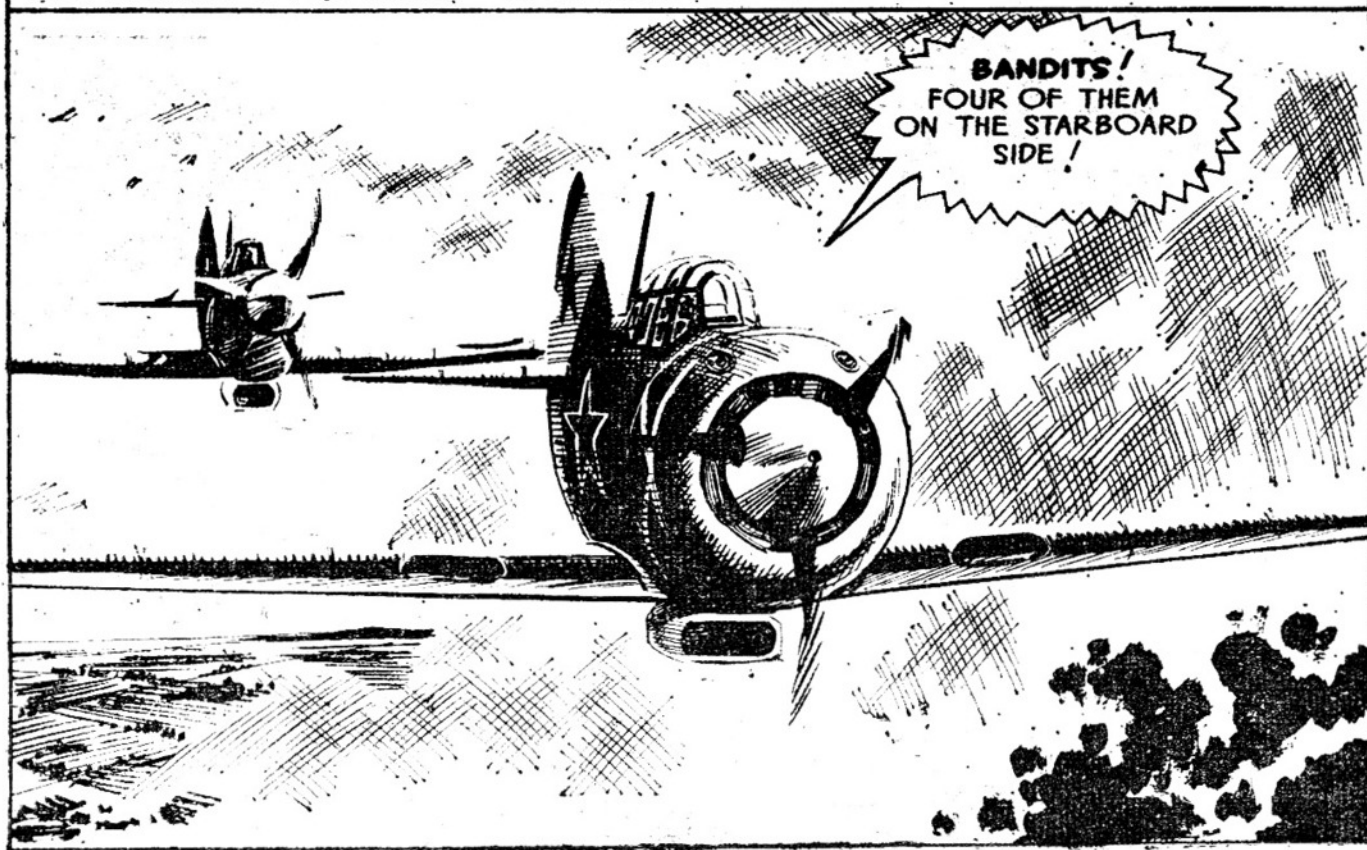
MEANWHILE, MAJOR YEGOROV AND THE REST OF THE SQUADRON HAD BEEN OBSERVING A GROUP OF ENEMY FIGHTERS, FLYING IN THE SAME DIRECTION BUT AT A SAFE DISTANCE FROM THE FORMATION.

WE'RE TOO
MANY FOR THEM SO
THEY WON'T ATTACK, JUST
WAIT FOR SOME ROOKIE
TO STRAY OUT OF
LINE AND THEN PICK
HIM OFF!

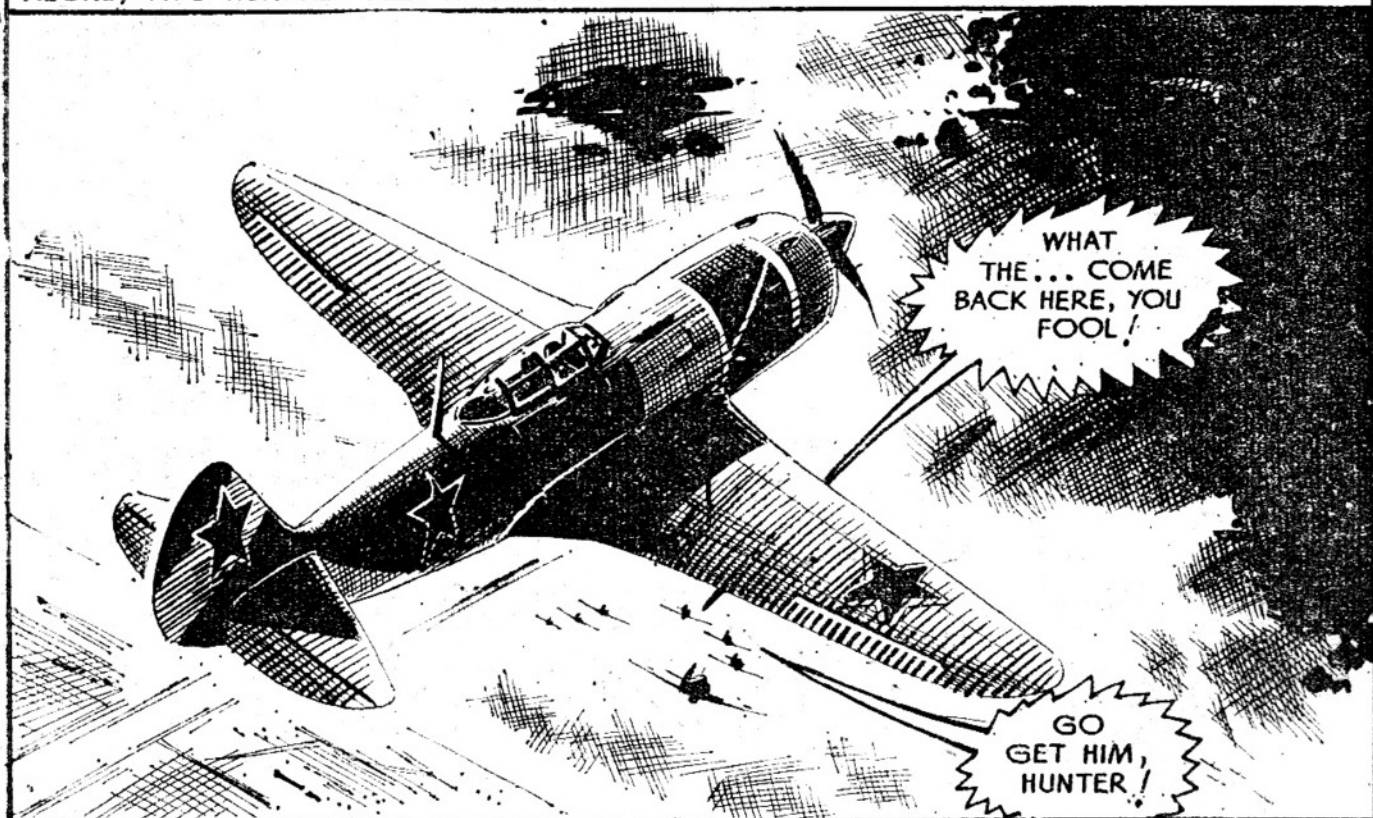


AS THE "TRAILING" PROCEDURE WAS SO COMMON, NONE OF THE PILOTS HAD REPORTED THE PRESENCE OF THE ENEMY — UNTIL ZHILIN SUDDENLY NOTICED THEM...

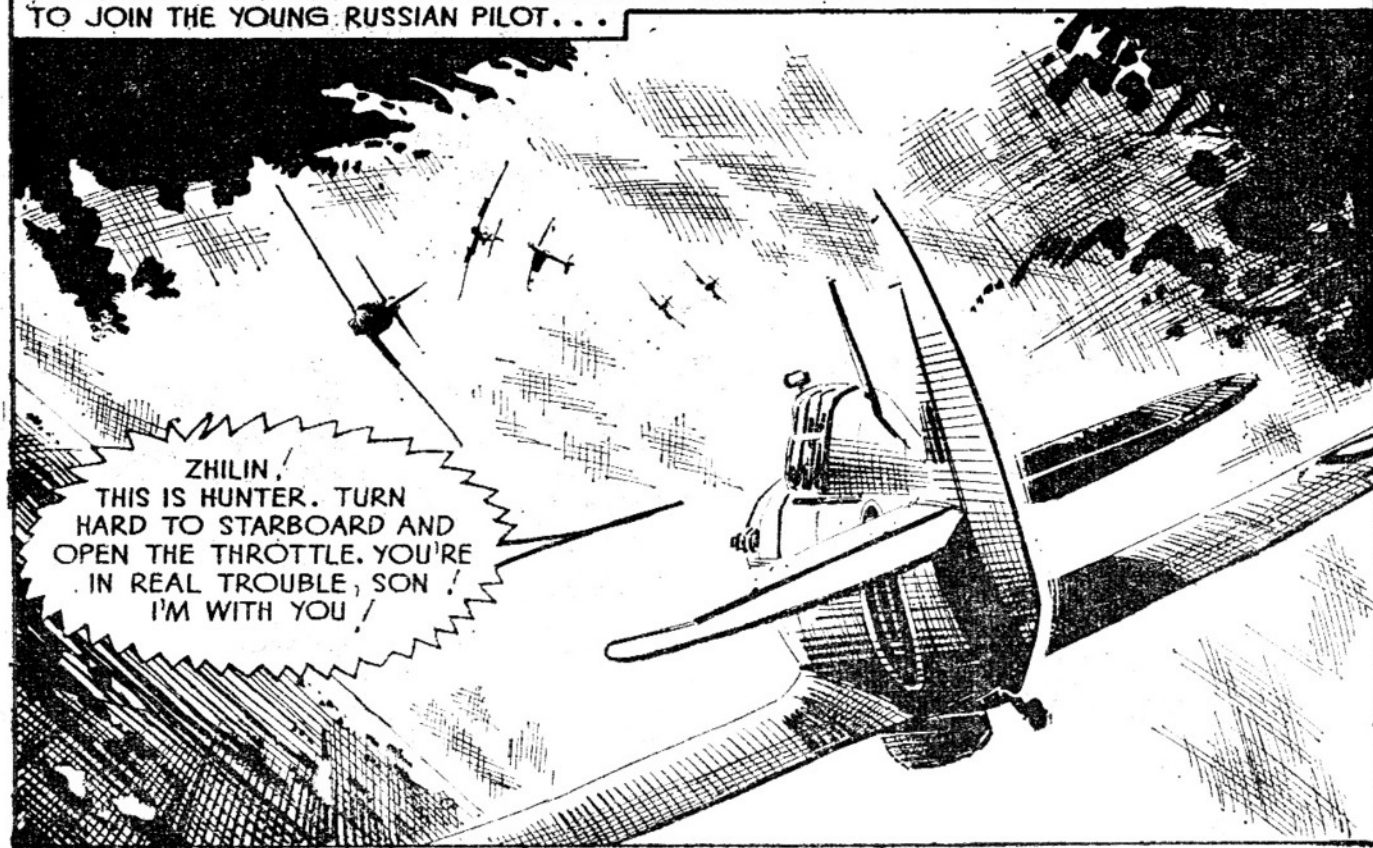
BANDITS!
FOUR OF THEM
ON THE STARBOARD
SIDE!



ZHILIN EXCITEDLY PULLED HIS AIRCRAFT UPWARDS IN A STEEP CLIMB TO GET TACTICAL HEIGHT ADVANTAGE. ALL HIS DISCIPLINE TRAINING WAS FORGOTTEN, AND WITHIN AN INSTANT, HE WAS ALONE, TWO HUNDRED FEET ABOVE AND BEHIND THE ALLIED FORMATION . . .

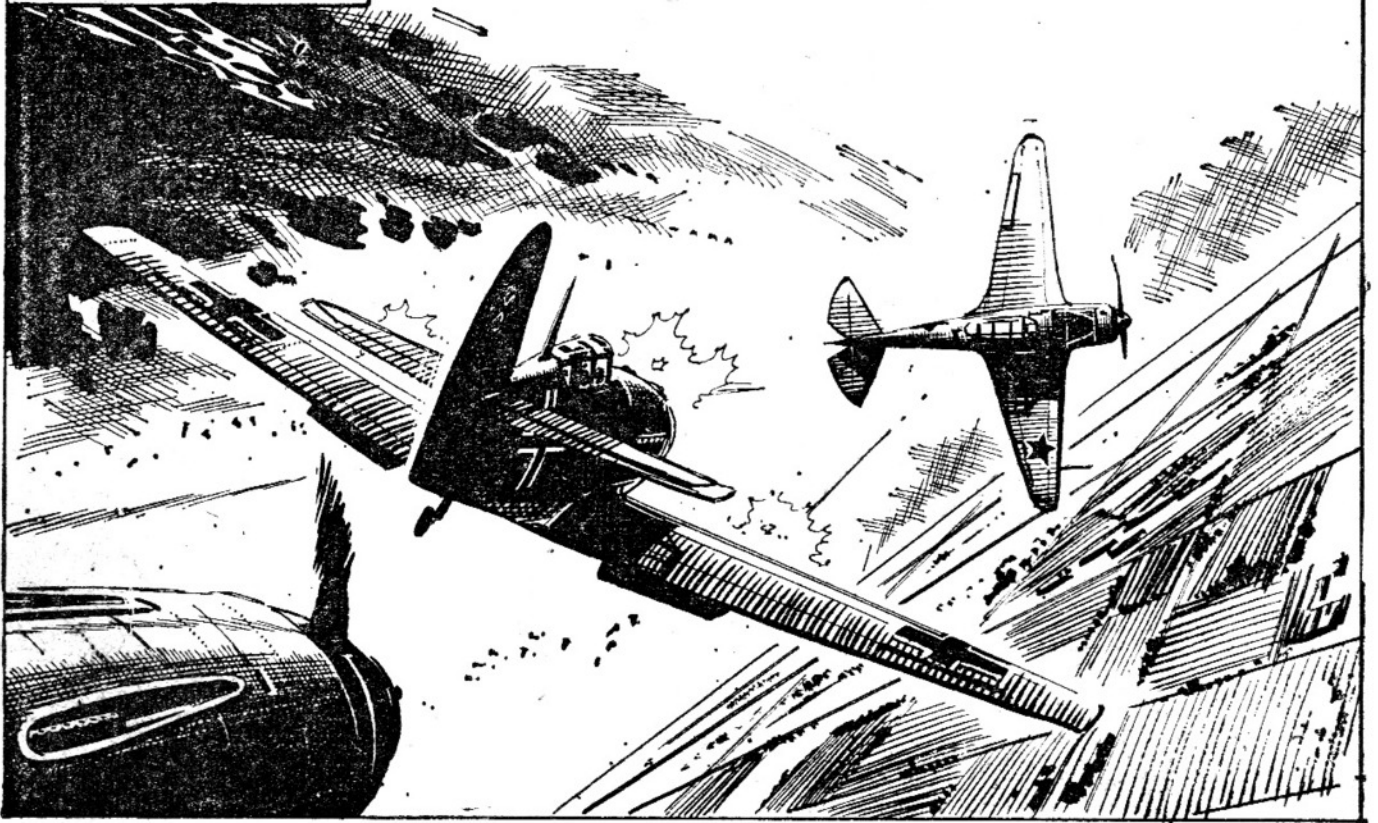


TWO OF THE ENEMY AIRCRAFT WERE ALREADY PEELING OFF IN A SINISTER FASHION AFTER THE LONE LAVOCHKIN AS HUNTER LOOPED HIS HURRICANE, ROLLED OFF THE TOP AND RACED TO JOIN THE YOUNG RUSSIAN PILOT . . .

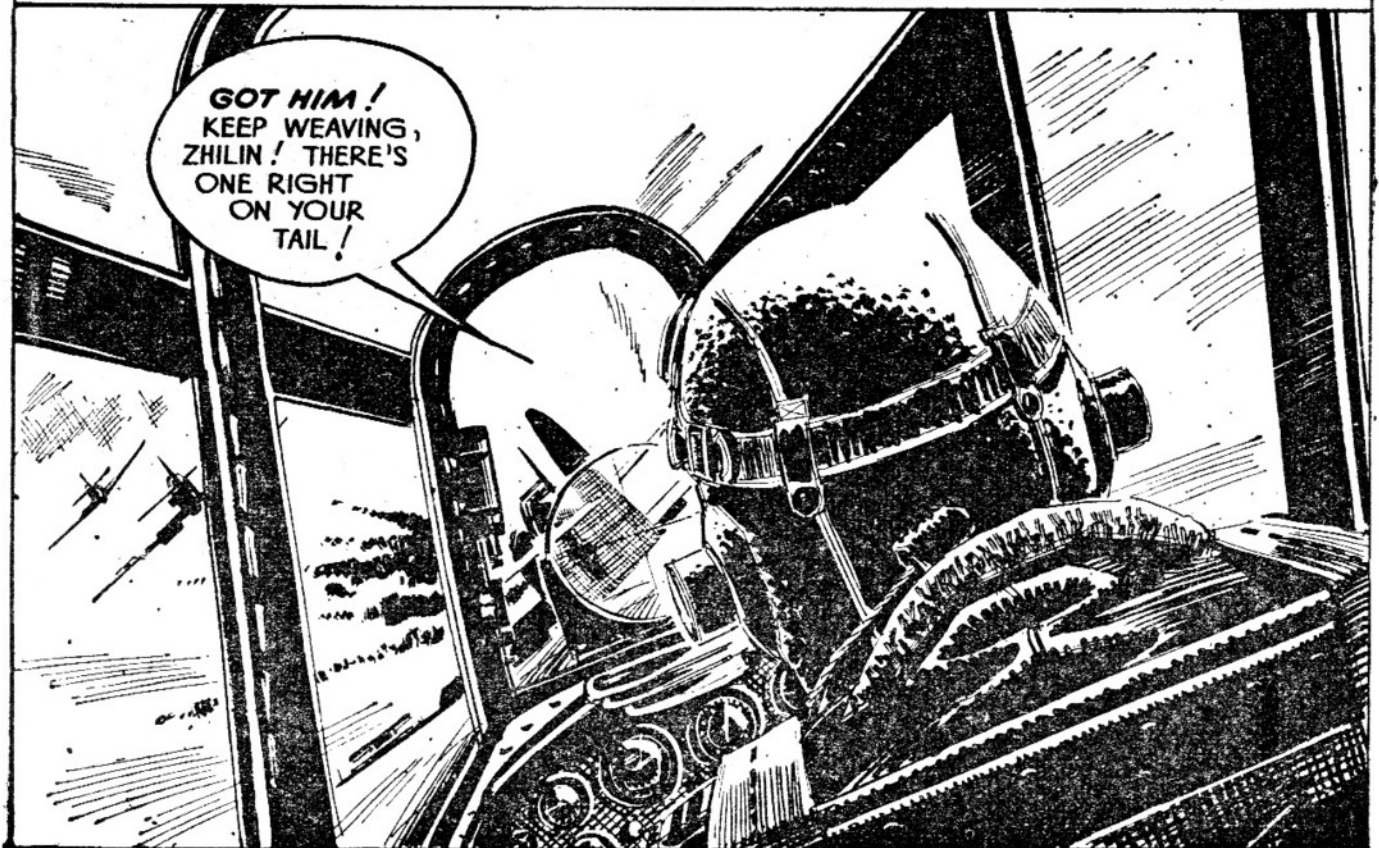


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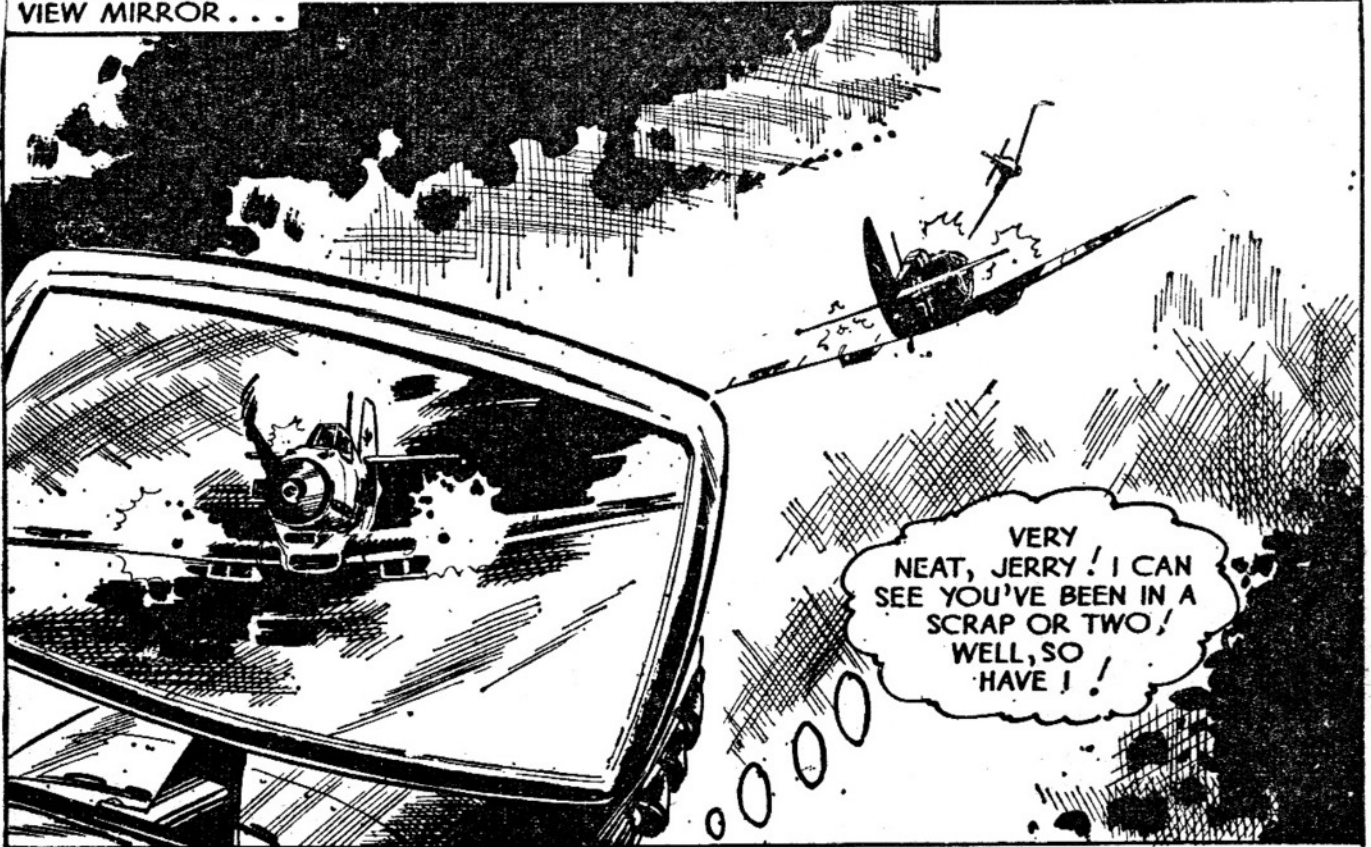
THE BATTLE-HARDENED LUFTWAFFE PILOTS SOON SAW IN THE RUSSIAN'S FUTILE MANOEUVRES THE HALLMARK OF THE 'ROOKIE PILOT', AND THEY CONVERGED LIKE A PACK OF WOLVES, GREEDY FOR THE KILL.



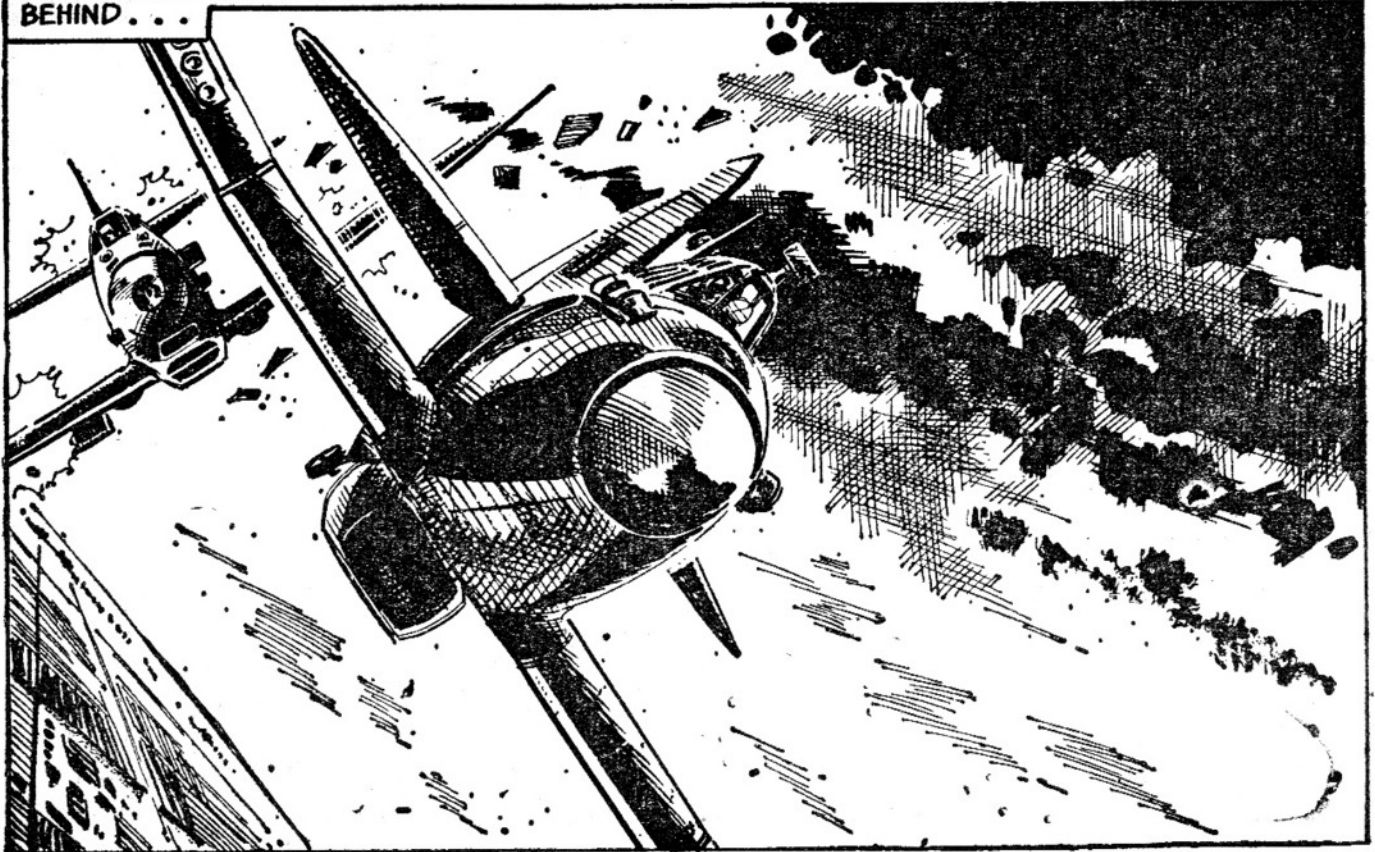
HUNTER'S AIRSPEED INDICATOR WAS ROTATING FURIOUSLY AS HE CLOSED THE GAP BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE ENEMY. THEN, AN ME. 109 MOMENTARILY HOVERED IN HIS GUNSIGHT. . .



THE HURRICANE PLOUGHED THROUGH THE WRECKAGE OF THE SHATTERED ENEMY FIGHTER, AND AS THE SMOKE CLEARED, HUNTER BECAME AWARE OF A DIM SHAPE DANCING IN HIS REAR VIEW MIRROR . . .

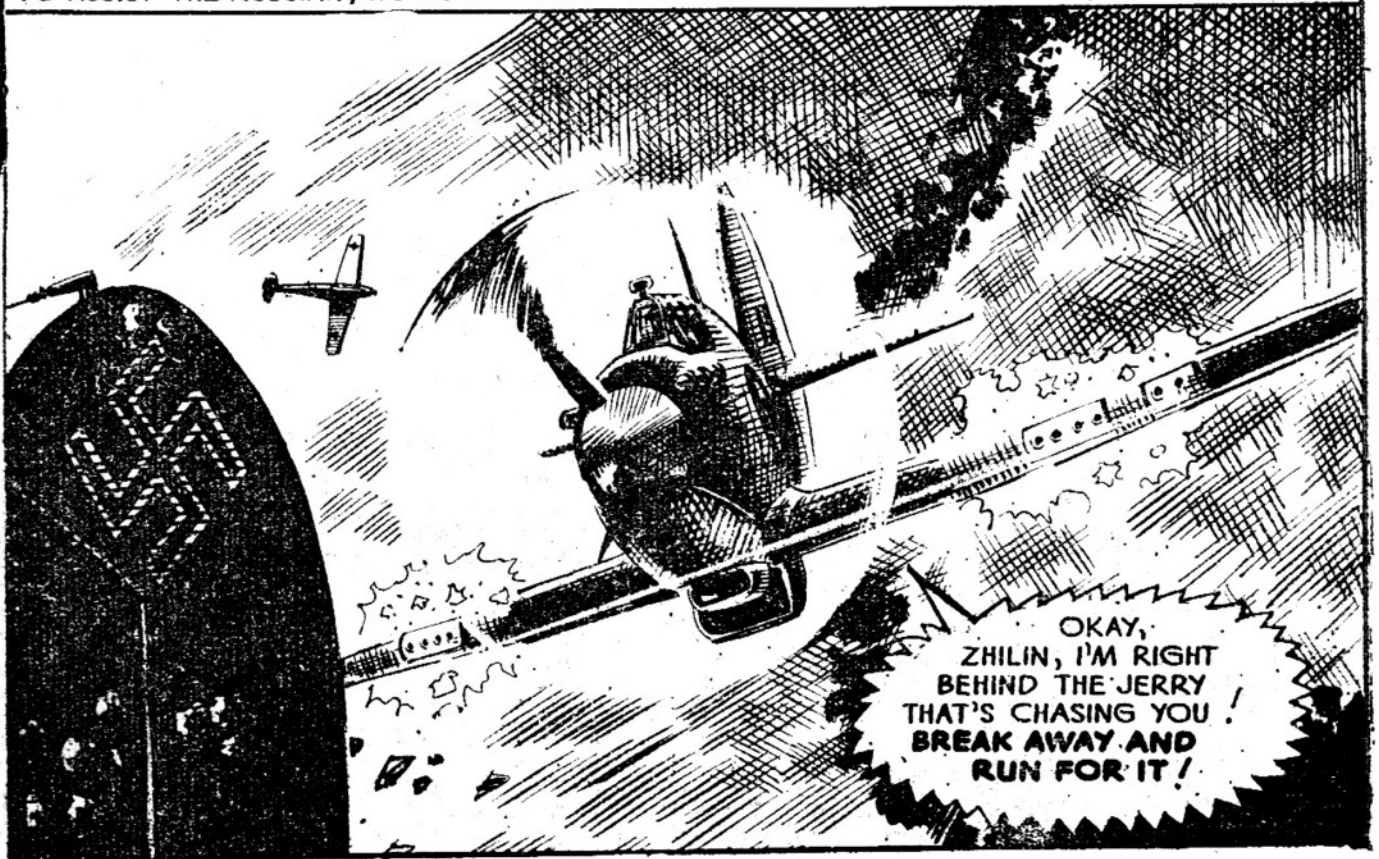


THROWING HIS AIRCRAFT INTO A VIOLENT PORT TURN, HUNTER FELT HIS HURRICANE SHUDDER AS THE STARBOARD AILERON WAS TORN BY A STREAM OF BULLETS FROM BEHIND . . .

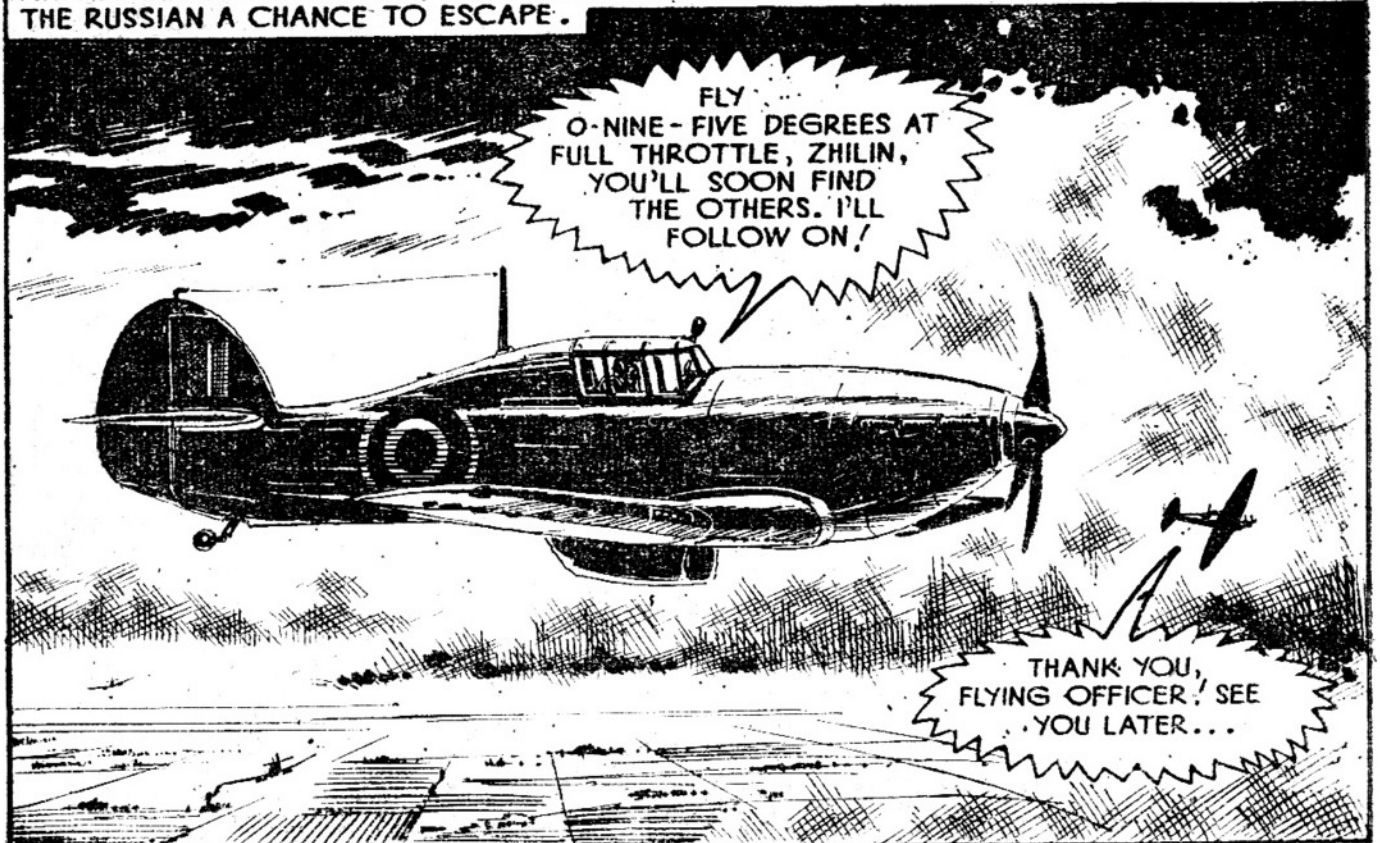


Umbrella in the Sky

THE LIGHTNING MANOEUVRE HAD SAVED HIM FROM DESTRUCTION, BUT AS HUNTER TURNED IN TO ASSIST THE RUSSIAN, HE COULD SENSE THE LOSS OF CONTROL. . .



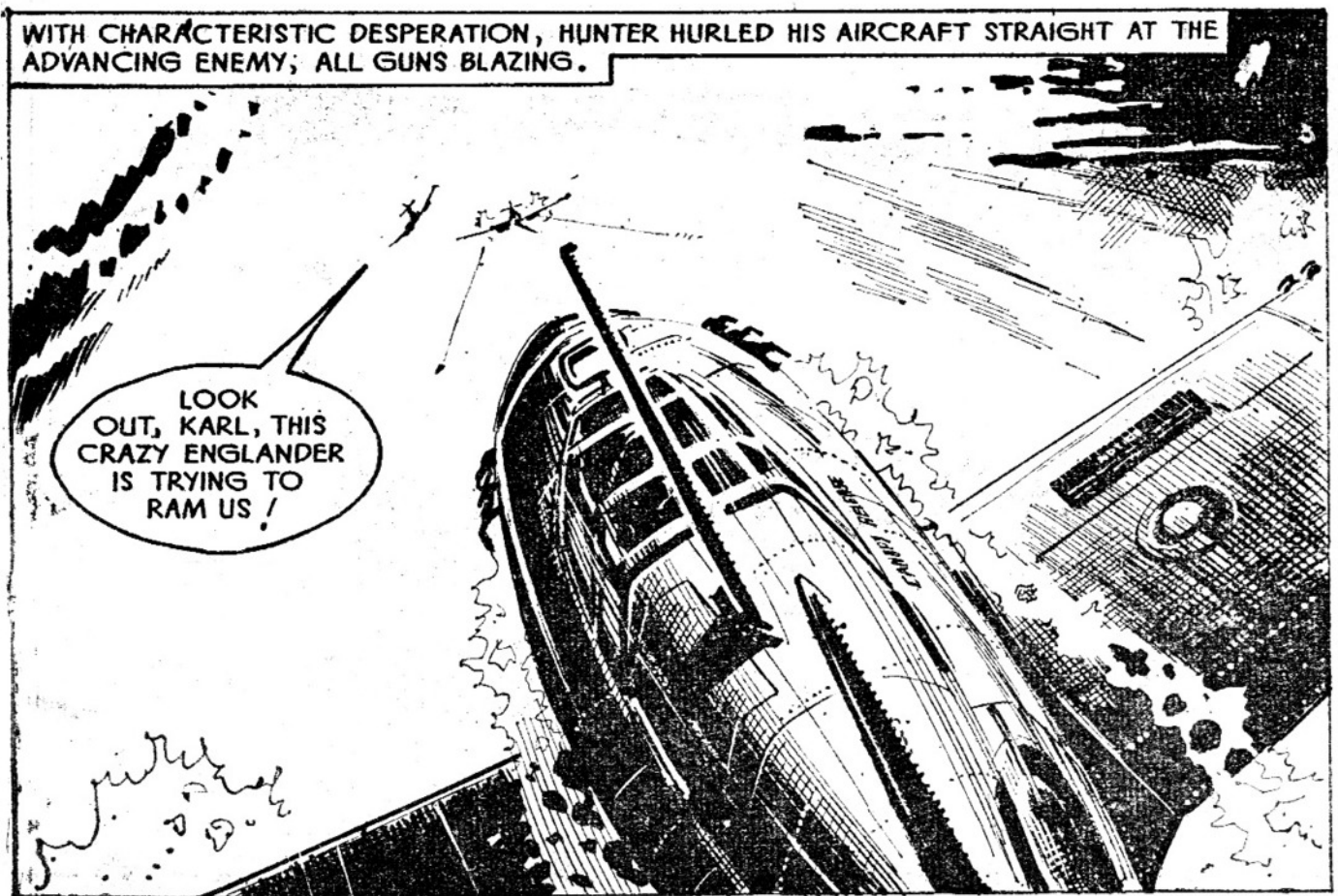
THE UNEXPECTED FIRE FROM HUNTER'S AIRCRAFT CAUSED THE GERMAN PILOT TO BREAK AWAY. BY SKILFUL TACTICS, HUNTER HAD SEPARATED THE TWO ENEMY AIRCRAFT, GIVING THE RUSSIAN A CHANCE TO ESCAPE.



ALTHOUGH HE SOUNDED CONFIDENT, HUNTER KNEW HIS POSITION WAS FRAUGHT WITH DANGER. THE GERMANS WERE NOT LIKELY TO LEAVE A DAMAGED ENEMY PLANE ALONE...

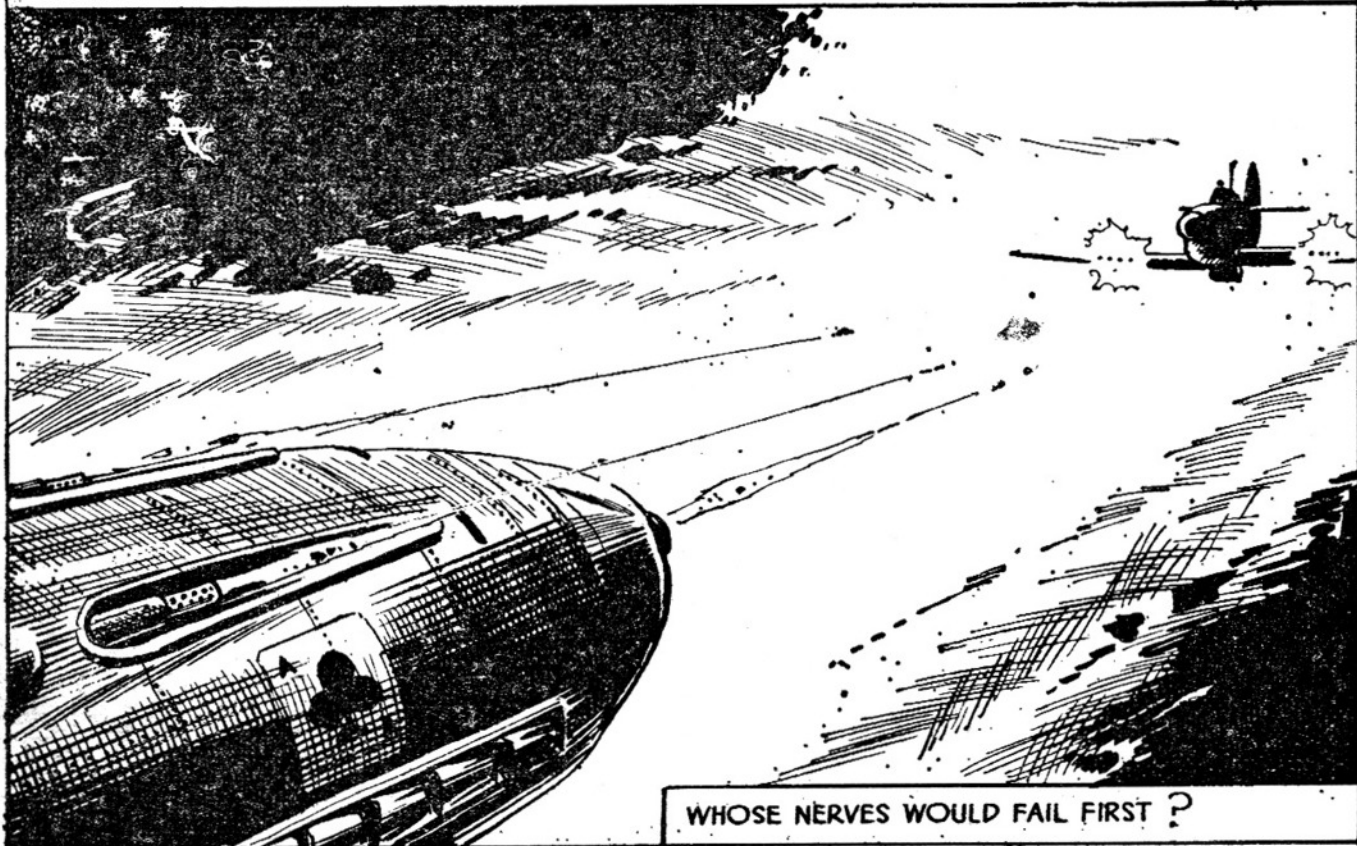


WITH CHARACTERISTIC DESPERATION, HUNTER HURLED HIS AIRCRAFT STRAIGHT AT THE ADVANCING ENEMY; ALL GUNS BLAZING.



Umbrella in the Sky

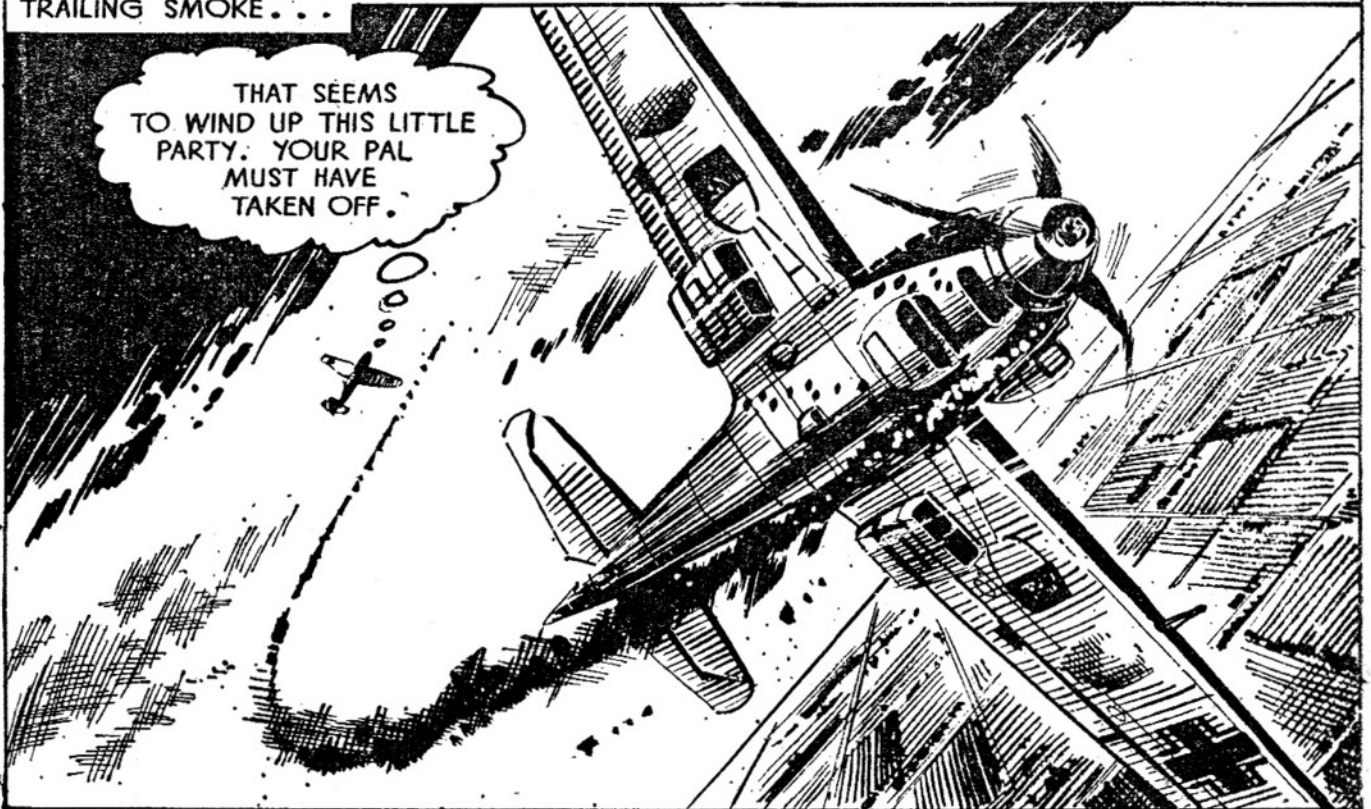
ONE GERMAN HAD GIVEN GROUND BUT THE OTHER BORE ON — THEY WERE ON A COLLISION COURSE. DESTRUCTION WOULD BE SWIFT FOR THE FIRST TO PULL OUT . . .



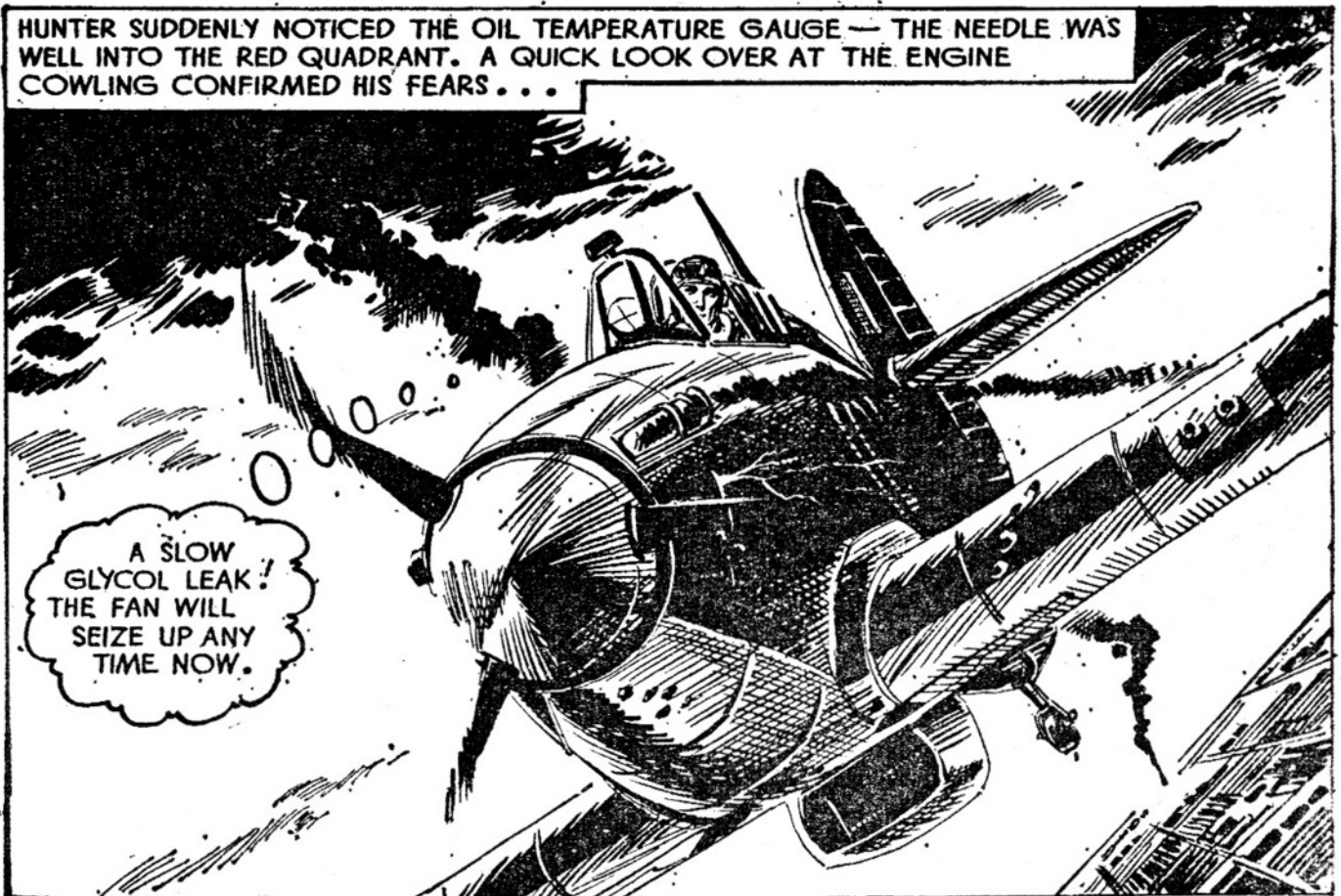
ALTHOUGH HUNTER DID NOT REALISE IT, HIS SUPREME TEST HAD COME. HE HAD ALWAYS SUSPECTED THAT AT HEART HE WAS A COWARD, BECAUSE HE FELT FEAR BEFORE EVERY MISSION. HE WAS TO LEARN THE TRUTH AT LAST . . .



A SPLIT-SECOND LATER, HUNTER SAW A DARK BULLET-RIDDLED SHAPE FLASH ABOVE HIS COCKPIT—AND HE KNEW THAT HE HAD WON THE BATTLE OF NERVES. HE PUT HIS HURRICANE INTO A GENTLE TURN, AND BEHIND HIM, THE MESSERSCHMITT SPIRALLED SLOWLY TO EARTH, TRAILING SMOKE...



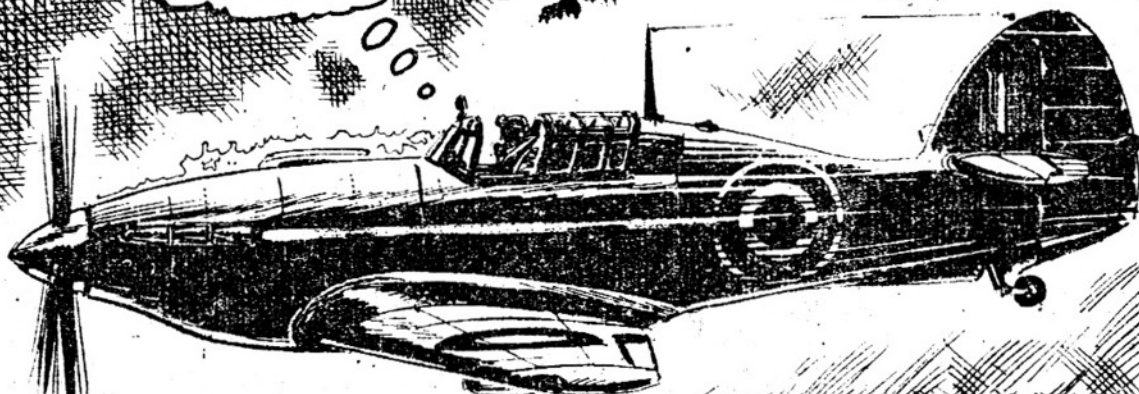
HUNTER SUDDENLY NOTICED THE OIL TEMPERATURE GAUGE — THE NEEDLE WAS WELL INTO THE RED QUADRANT. A QUICK LOOK OVER AT THE ENGINE COWLING CONFIRMED HIS FEARS...



Umbrella in the Sky

WITH THE COOLING FLUID LEAKING OUT, THE POWERFUL AERO-ENGINE WAS OVERHEATING RAPIDLY. HUNTER'S CHANCES OF MAKING BASE WERE PRETTY SLIM, YET HE DOGGEDLY HEADED THE HURRICANE TOWARDS HIS OWN LINES.

I'M LOSING ALTITUDE FAST AND THE WHOLE CRATE COULD GO UP IN FLAMES ANY MOMENT, BUT I'M HANGED IF I'M GOING TO LET THE JERRIES GET ME.



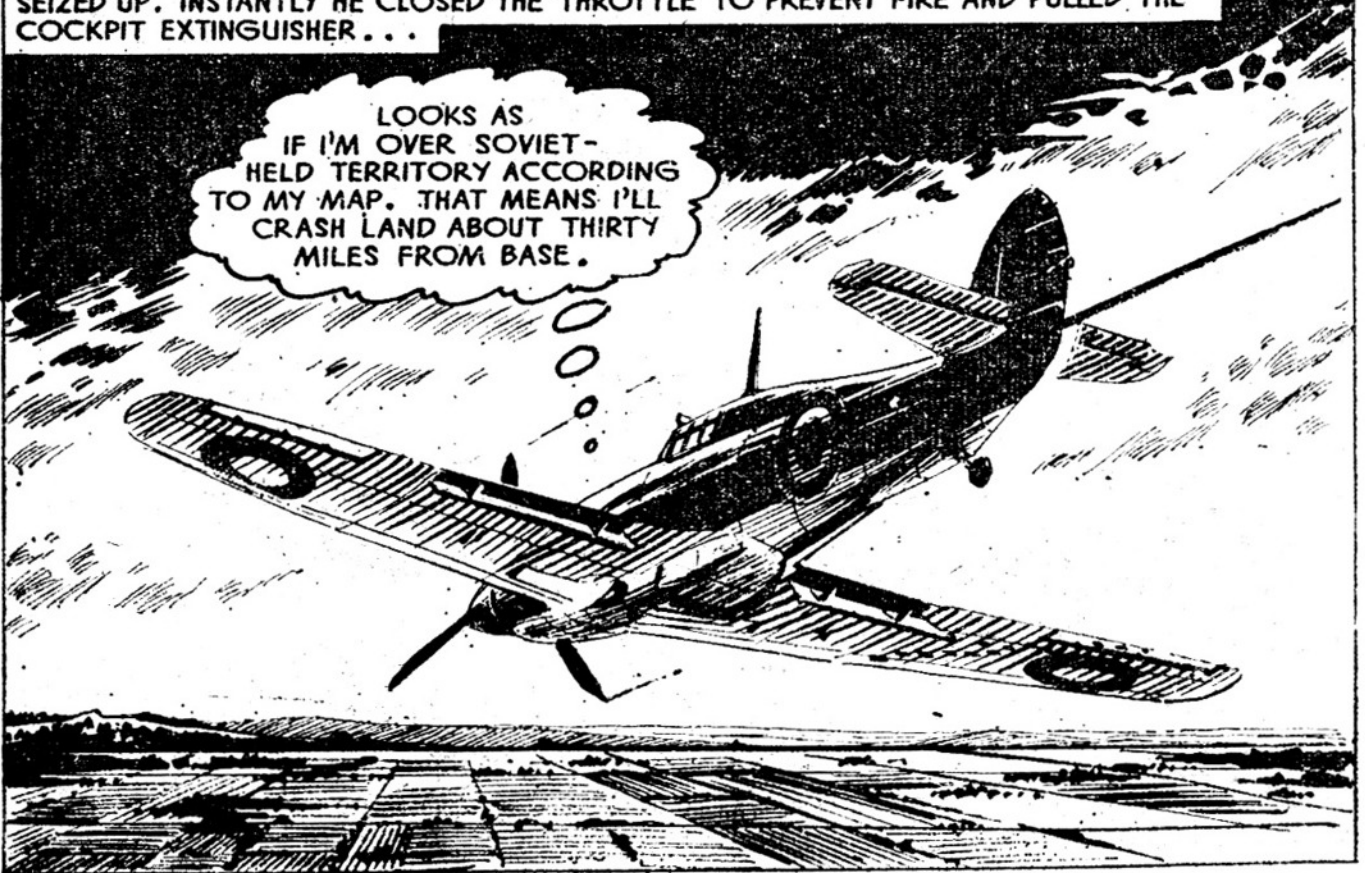
HUNTER HAD BEEN NURSING THE FAILING HURRICANE FOR SEVEN MINUTES WHEN HE SUDDENLY BECAME AWARE OF THE FACT THAT HE WAS ACTING WITH SUPREME COOLNESS IN A DESPERATE SITUATION. FOR THE FIRST TIME HE SAW THAT COWARDICE AND FEAR WERE NOT THE SAME THING . . .

PERHAPS I'VE BEEN WRONG ! I COULD HAVE BALED OUT AND BEEN TAKEN AS A P.O.W., AND THE WAR WOULD BE OVER FOR ME ! BUT HERE I AM, STRAPPED TO A FLYING COFFIN, TRYING TO MAKE BASE AND GET BACK INTO THE WAR . . .



A LOUD CLATTER FROM THE ENGINE TOLD HUNTER THAT THE TORTURED PISTONS HAD SEIZED UP. INSTANTLY HE CLOSED THE THROTTLE TO PREVENT FIRE AND PULLED THE COCKPIT EXTINGUISHER . . .

LOOKS AS IF I'M OVER SOVIET-HELD TERRITORY ACCORDING TO MY MAP. THAT MEANS I'LL CRASH LAND ABOUT THIRTY MILES FROM BASE.



AS THE CRIPPLED PLANE GLIDED TOWARDS THE GROUND, TWO RUSSIAN INFANTRYMEN WATCHED IT WARILY.

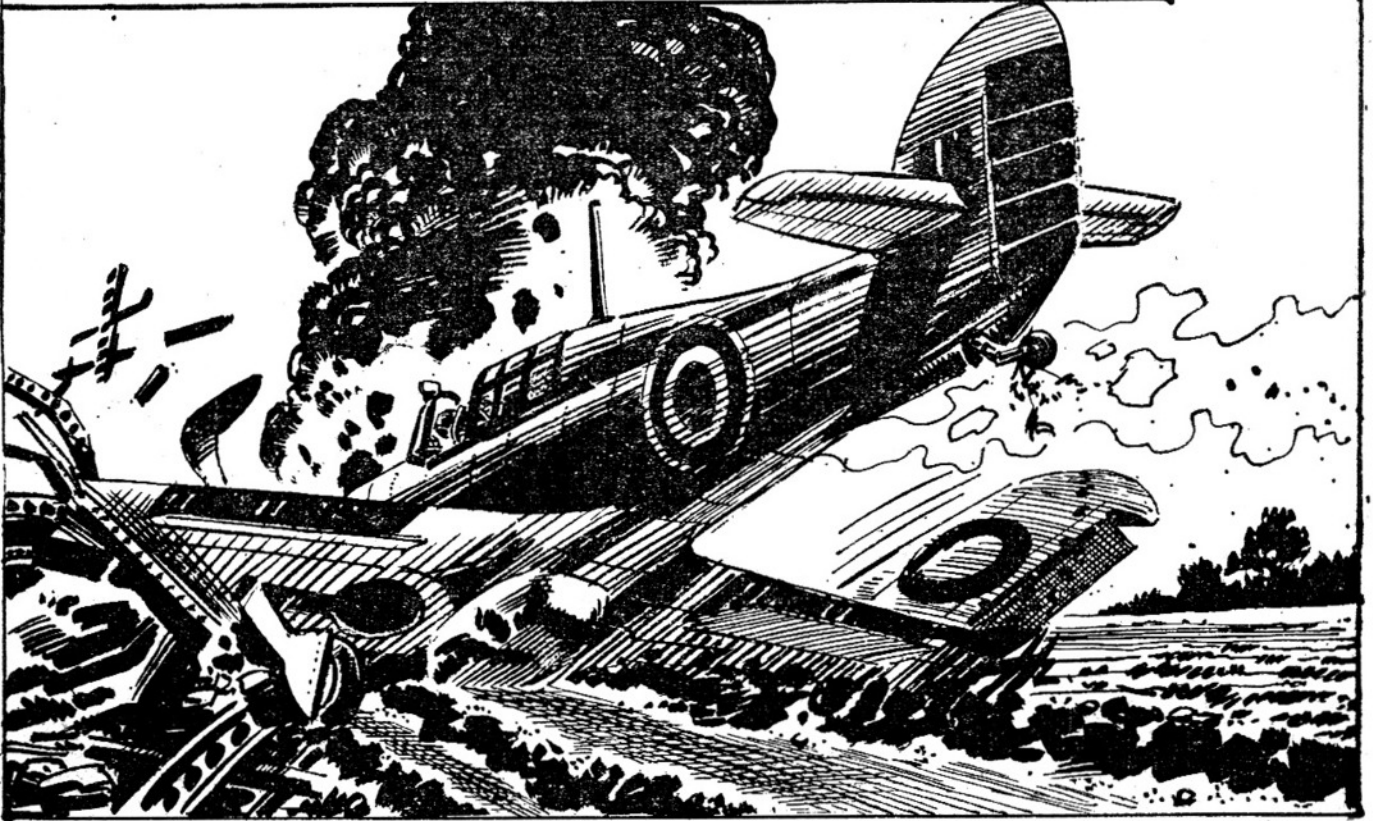
WHAT IS IT? DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A HUN!

NOT A SOVIET FIGHTER EITHER. I CAN'T SEE THE MARKINGS FROM HERE. GET READY FOR TROUBLE, COMRADE!



Umbrella in the Sky

THE HURRICANE CAME IN JUST ABOVE STALLING SPEED, GOUGING A DEEP TRAIL IN THE SOIL. SUDDENLY THE OIL COOLER RADIATOR UNDER THE FUSELAGE CAUGHT ON A PROJECTING ROCK, AND THE NOSE WENT IN . . .



THEY FOUND THE PILOT SLUMPED FORWARD, UNCONSCIOUS. HE HAD STRUCK HIS HEAD ON THE GUNSIGHT WITH THE IMPACT OF LANDING...



Umbrella in the Sky

A SERIES OF VIOLENT EXPLOSIONS ROCKED THE EARTH AROUND THE RESCUERS, AND WHEN THE NOISE HAD DIED DOWN, THEY STAGGERED TO THE COVER OF SOME TREES, TAKING HUNTER WITH THEM.



HUNTER SLOWLY BECAME AWARE OF THE MEN WITH HIM, AND HIS MUSCLES TENSED. HIS RIGHT HAND DROPPED INSTINCTIVELY TO HIS REVOLVER — IF THEY WERE GERMANS... THEN HE SAW THEY WERE RUSSIAN SOLDIERS.



MEANWHILE, BACK AT BALKOV FIGHTER FIELD, THE SQUADRON HAD RETURNED, AND THE YOUNG RUSSIAN PILOT, LIEUTENANT ZHILIN, WAS MAKING HIS REPORT TO THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER.

I SAW HUNTER GET ONE, BUT HE WAS HIT HIMSELF. I CAN'T SAY HOW BADLY. HE ORDERED ME BACK TO THE FORMATION, SAID HE WOULD FOLLOW ON. THERE WERE TWO HUNS LEFT AT THAT TIME.

POOR OLD HUNTER, IT LOOKS BAD FOR HIM.



LATER THAT EVENING, ALL THE PILOTS WERE GATHERED IN THE MESS TO LISTEN TO THE DAY'S NEWS ON THE RADIO. SEVERAL HOURS HAD PASSED SINCE HUNTER HAD LAST BEEN SEEN AND THEY HAD GIVEN UP HOPE FOR HIM. SUDDENLY THE DOOR OPENED...

GOOD EVENING, MAJOR, I AM SAROV, RED ARMY. MY MEN PICKED UP THIS AIRMAN THIS AFTERNOON, HE CLAIMS TO...

FLYING OFFICER HUNTER! SO YOU MADE IT! WELCOME BACK!



Umbrella In the Sky

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, HUNTER FOUND HIMSELF GREETED WITH WARMTH BY HIS COMRADES. ZHILIN WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO COME FORWARD. . .



A FEW MINUTES LATER, HUNTER'S OLD ENEMY, LIEUTENANT SAVCHENKO APPROACHED HIM, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE BRITISH PILOT DID NOT SEE HOSTILITY IN HIS FACE. . .



THE RUSSIAN'S MANNER WAS AWKWARD AND EMBARRASSED — BUT HE WAS OBVIOUSLY SINCERE . . .

ZHILIN TOLD ME OF YOUR BRAVE ACTION IN SAVING HIM THIS AFTERNOON. I FEEL THAT I OWE YOU AN APOLOGY FOR THE INCIDENT THAT OCCURRED WHEN COMRADE BUNEYEV WAS SHOT DOWN. I CRUELLY MISJUDGED YOU, COMRADE.

YOU HAD CAUSE TO, LIEUTENANT SAVCHENKO. IT WOULD SEEM THAT I PROVOKED THE COMMENTS THAT YOU MADE. I AM ALSO TO BLAME.

MAJOR YEGOROV AND FLIGHT LIEUTENANT NELSON WATCHED THE REUNION WITH MUTUAL SATISFACTION.

IT SEEMS THAT YOUR FLYING OFFICER HUNTER HAS AT LAST LEARNED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEAR AND COWARDICE, COMRADE.

I WAS THINKING THE SAME THING, MAJOR. IT TAKES TIME FOR A YOUNG PILOT TO LEARN THAT WE ALL HAVE MOMENTS OF FEAR IN THIS WAR. ONE CANNOT TELL THEM, THEY ONLY BECOME ANNOYED THAT THEY SHOW THEIR FEELINGS SO CLEARLY. THEY HAVE TO FIND IT OUT FOR THEMSELVES.

Umbrella in the Sky

SO, IT WAS THAT FLYING OFFICER HUNTER FOUND HIS TRUE SELF IN THE AIR WAR ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT. HIS SCORE MOUNTED STEADILY EACH WEEK AND NOT FAR BEHIND WAS LIEUTENANT SAVCHENKO OF THE RED AIR FORCE. A FRIENDLY RIVALRY HAD GROWN BETWEEN THEM . . .

RUNWAY
CLEAR FOR TAKE
OFF! OUT!

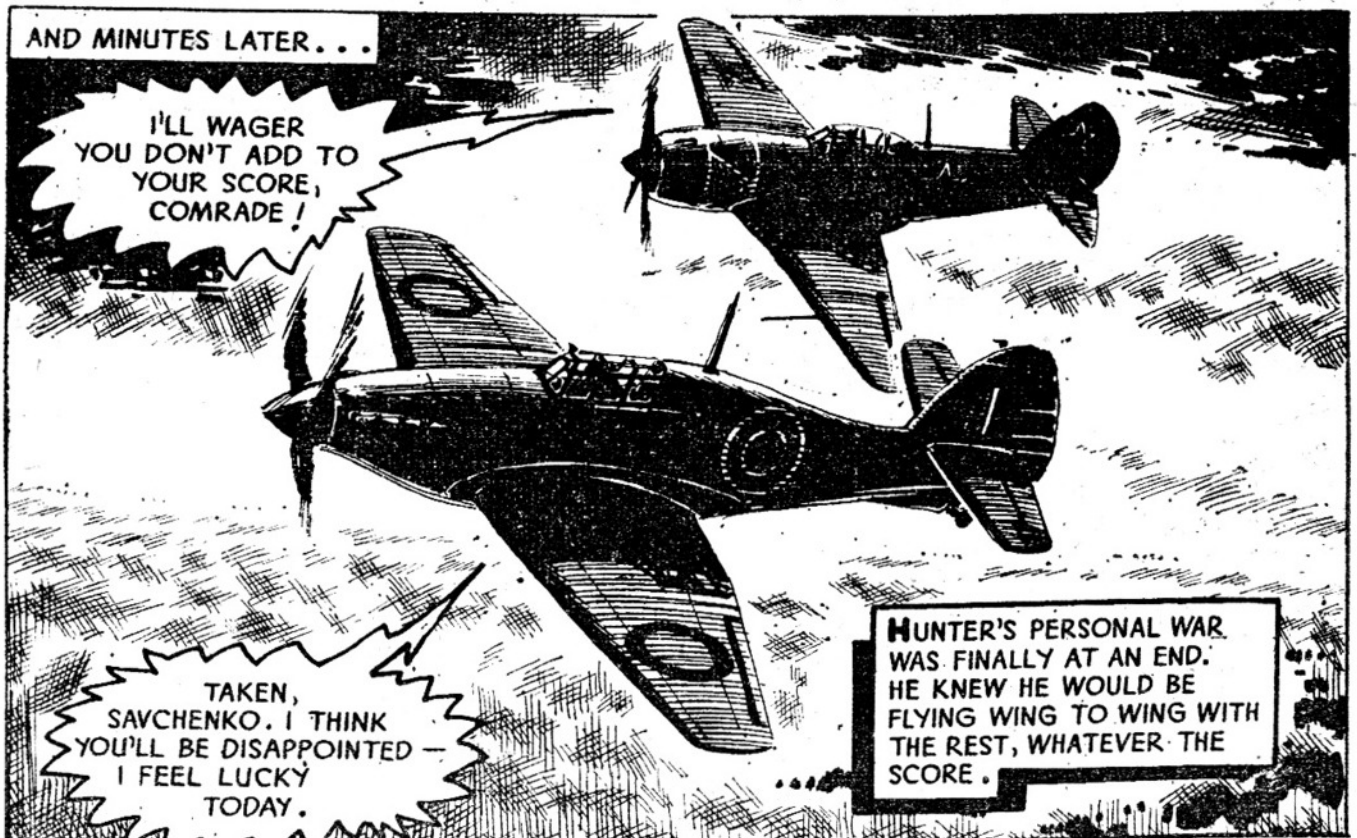


AND MINUTES LATER . . .

I'LL WAGER
YOU DON'T ADD TO
YOUR SCORE,
COMRADE!

TAKEN,
SAVCHENKO. I THINK
YOU'LL BE DISAPPOINTED —
I FEEL LUCKY
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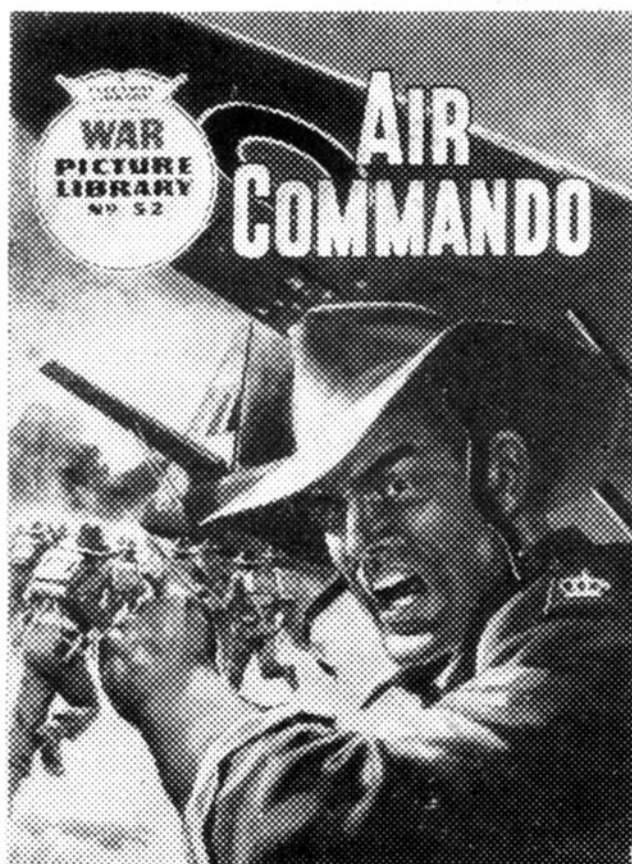


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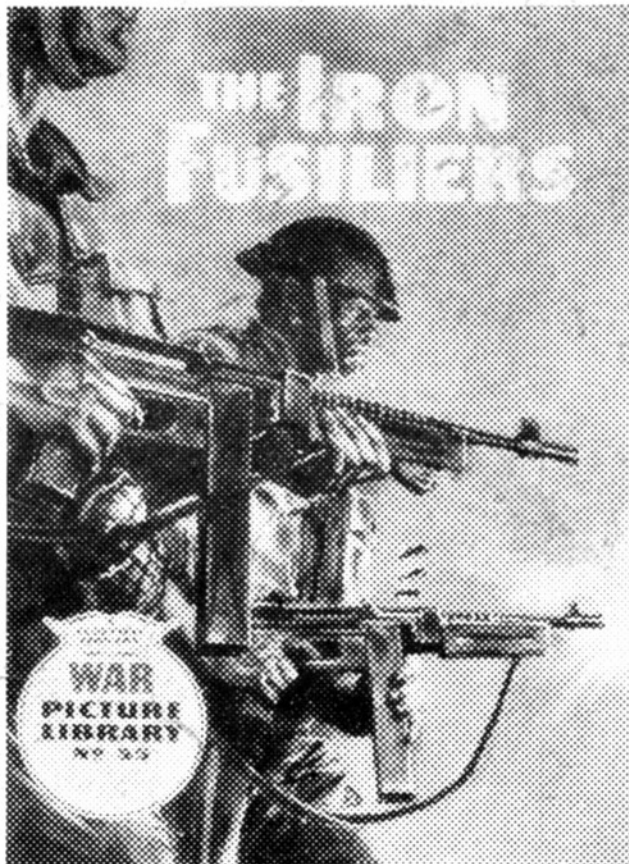
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